

Activist lives – activist perspectives



Colloquium Collected Readings

A Special Edition of Upper Catchment Issues Tasmania

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The Colloquium was organized by the Tasmanian Community Resource Auditors Inc., Dorset Waterwatch and Community Futures Network (Tas) to facilitate debate and discussion among grassroots activists. The comments made by each of the authors does not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the organizing bodies or their members.

The key thematic of the colloquium is:

'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world – indeed it is the only thing that ever has'.

Margaret Mead

It is intended to generate quiet reflection, lively discussion, debate and hopefully insight into who we are, what we do and with what success.

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The front cover graphic was created by Brenda Rosser Titled, "Final Dispossession". Brenda describes its creation and meaning, *"When I created that image I was thinking of the human being as being as deeply entrenched in natural habitat as any other living creature and just as vulnerable to damage to the ecosystem upon which we all depend. In the bottom left hand corner there's a group of protesters on a raft which has a flag attached to it. The flag represents 'the cause'. The raft is sort of like Noah's Ark; it is the last refuge before everything falls apart. At the same time this miniature iconic image comes from the days of the battle against the Franklin Dam. It's a clear reference to the gutting of Tasmania as is the broken tree behind the crouching figure near the centre of the painting. The painting is entitled 'Final Dispossession'. It is meant to imply that there have been several waves of dispossession up till our time. The white man came and stole the land away from the original human and animal inhabitants. Then the land was dispossessed of living things themselves as the massacres against the aboriginals and native flora and fauna occurred; with the latter continuing today. The final dispossession is when we **all** lose everything, which is the inevitable logic of an economic and social system founded on short term profit for profit sake/ego for ego sake"*.

We warmly thank Brenda for generously allowing us to reproduce her painting on the front cover of this special edition.

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Foreword

The question, "Why do you do what you do?" is perhaps one of the toughest questions any of us would face in a lifetime. It's easily brushed aside as simply irrelevant, too hard or only an excuse for self promotion or aggrandizement.

Despite these concerns, pondering on the question of who we are becoming is not only worthy, but many would argue essential if we are to have any hope of understanding the true nature of just and sustainable change. Questions relating to effectiveness and our reasons for engagement may loom large as we question our motives and *raison d'être* and indeed how effective grass roots activism has been in its daily work on behalf of our communities. How do we gauge our effectiveness? How do we know we have the support and indeed authority of our community? For some of us these are vital and important questions.

The collected readings are a reflection of the views, perceptions ideas and indeed aspirations of many of those who attended the Activist Colloquium. Each author brings their own story, their own interpretation as to what it means to be an activist in these tumultuous times, where no longer can anyone lay claim to any one truth as 'the' way.

Advocacy on behalf of citizens here in Tasmania is not without its challenges. Many of us question whether we have an 'automatic' authority to act on behalf of communities who, more and more, find themselves confronted by the ever growing push for 'development' of our natural resources. We despair as citizens are repeatedly left out of important government and industry decision-making processes. In our interventions we realize that we too are caught in the conundrum of questions surrounding the ethics of representation and advocacy.

The emergence of new approaches to activism, each with their own style, will hopefully deliver expected outcomes. The Colloquium was an opportunity to undertake dialogue, analysis and interpretation of our lived experience so that we may explore not only our practice (and our issues), but moreover how we can deliver an activism that meets the new challenges we are about to face. To that end, dialogue with each other about our practice will prove highly valuable.

Philip J. Tattersall and Kim Eastman (TCRA Inc.), Editors and Colloquium organizers

Introduction

The idea for the Colloquium came about as a result of concerns over what appeared to be a lack of dialogue within the grass roots activist movement here in Tasmania.

It seems that activists are so busy working on their issues of concern that there is little or no time left over for discussion or reflection, let alone celebration. It follows that only seldom do we get to look into the great work being done by our ‘colleagues’ who spend countless hours labouring on behalf of our environment and the citizenry.

The Colloquium was an attempt to do two things. The first is to bring activists together to celebrate their work, visions and hopes and secondly to learn from each other as we discussed, reflected and interpreted our practice. Such opportunities are vital as we attempt to move from a concern with our ‘issues’ to a dialogue about what it means to be an effective activist/advocate.

This collection is split into 2 sections. The first presents papers detailing various stories about coming to activism. Some are in the form of brief sketches, while others take the form of more in-depth personal narratives. The second section explores ideas for the emergence of new ways forward for activism as three authors present their ideas.

The aim of the collection is to stimulate debate and reflection on what it means to be an activist and what new trajectories could look like.

The organizers thank Dorset Waterwatch and Community Futures Network Tasmania for their financial and organizational assistance.

Part 1 Activist Stories

A collection of readings in support of the Colloquium, “Community Based Activism Into the Future – What Could it Look Like?”

Brenda Rosser,

My Activist Story

I was in my 'child' self when I wrote this draft and this may explain some of the oversimplification inherent within the words. Alterations could perpetually be made of such a personal story. Whilst the focus was on the chaos around me I could have pointed out that I too was never an unflawed individual. Further that there were always very understandable and legitimate reasons why members of my family struggled in their relationships and in their lives.

I hope that my activism will always be equally a quest for personal change and growth just as I seek this from the world in general.

I have been asked to write an article about why I became an activist. It's a task I've tried to evade for a number of reasons. Firstly, I don't view myself as an 'activist'. Secondly I haven't formed a clear definition of what one is and, finally, the whole subject of activism appears to be challenging and complex and therefore not that easy to write about.

Whatever I write from here on, in this article, are my preliminary thoughts and therefore will probably be subject to a great deal of modification as time goes on.

Perhaps I've been identified as an activist because it's rather unconventional for an ordinary person to research and write regularly on environmental political and social subjects. Perhaps it's because I've taken advantage of the Internet group-email list tools to get the news out to other concerned people about what's happening in my own and other communities in Tasmania, with particular focus on the dangerous industrial use of chemicals in the context of corporate 'forestry' activities.

These activities seem to me to be a reflection of 'the place' I'm in. More precisely, they represent the mental environment of 'me' which is, in turn, responding to and created by the things that are happening in the physical and social world around me. What I do reflects my current understanding of the

world. I think that large changes in ourselves and our world are long overdue. I'm 'unconventional' and this is nothing new.

From the earliest time I can remember I have felt that I didn't 'fit'; didn't 'belong'. I was the isolated child in a large family of isolated children. My mother and father struggled to find a way to care for themselves and to care for their children. This struggle was made all the more intense because my parents were the youngest children in their respective large families. They were also both descended from generations of children separated from their parents; orphans marrying orphans. On my father's side, Irish famine girls out of the workhouses of Ireland who were handed a pair of shoes to walk off the gangway at Port Philip. My mother's mother spent a large portion of her childhood in an industrial school in Sydney and resented the brutal discipline that the Catholic nuns handed out.

I don't think I was that keen to be born. My mother said she was in labour for two weeks and she felt that I had been putting my birth day off for as long as I possibly could.

My father suffered from a very long-term 'condition' that has no clear name. It may have been a combination of post-traumatic-stress disorder as well as the early mental expression of Parkinson's disease. The latter illness was diagnosed when my father was in his mid fifties. In any case this un-ease, or 'dis-ease' manifested itself as a dark mood that came over dad almost every day. My mother, in turn, suffered from long term and severe depression.

Signs of great strain in my parents' marriage appeared almost immediately after their wedding. My mother resented the lack of help forthcoming from her extended family but they too seemed also to be stuck in their own feelings of dire need without seeing the cries for help from those close to them and all around.

Our house was full of signs of distress. Doors slammed loudly. Voices shouted. Wet bed sheets in the morning. Quiet desperation.

I had trouble going to sleep at night and then on waking up in the morning. At school I was bored for most of the day. I kept to myself. Almost every Friday I ducked out of sport or physical education and stayed at home to help my mother. Of course I didn't know how dangerous this behaviour was in a family full of needy children; to be the only one to have exclusive time with a mother;

time that everyone desperately needed. To be a child providing support to a mother who was searching for a mother.

I became my mother's hero and my family's pariah.

I didn't understand why it was that no matter what I did I couldn't win. I had no apparent means of pleasing or pacifying the important others in my life.

Eventually I realized that being a scapegoat gave me enormous freedom to do precisely what I would like to do. And freedom fitted the general mood at the time in any case. Rock and roll, social protest, women's liberation.

We were the first family in the street to get a television. That was 1959. A few years later John Fitzgerald Kennedy became President of the United States. He was a television president; so different from the old and lifeless Prime Minister Robert Menzies. Kennedy was handsome and much younger and his speeches were surprisingly interesting. I was searching for meaning and understanding and there was spirituality about his words that made me stop what I was doing and listen carefully. Problems and differences saddened me. But President Kennedy said:

"If we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity."

"Our problems are man-made, therefore they may be solved by man. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings."

He gave me *hope*. He taught me that sometimes it is absolutely necessary to break the law's that cause the pain and move on to a better way of living. So did Martin Luther King. Here was a black man – another pariah – who had the audacity to refuse to accept the status quo. He led and united thousands of people. Black *and* white. Seemingly powerful white people were forced to change laws to accommodate the moral demands that this man made on his country.

"A genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus but a molder of consensus."

"An individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for the law."

Whatever was dreadfully wrong in the world didn't begin and end in my parent's house. The laws and conventions that caused the pain could be broken.

I think I am an activist. Because it seems to me that the opposite of 'activism' is to be passive in this world; to accept your current understanding of the world as final. It is simply wrong to accept our individual and collective predicament and bar any chance of moving out of the pain we're all enmeshed in.

Todd Walsh,

Researcher,

Giant Freshwater Lobster Protection

On Becoming an Activist

I commenced activism (I'm not sure I'm a bona fide activist) in 1997. I was purely motivated by the fact that the Tasmanian Giant Freshwater Lobster, an animal I had been fascinated with since a small boy, was becoming totally protected through legislation. I also felt that the animal wasn't guaranteed a long term future and the protection was just knee jerk. I believed that the powers that be were content just to place a ban on fishing and little else. I have worked on all key issues concerning the Tasmanian Giant Freshwater Lobster. These issues included research, protection of habitat, enforcement of illegal poaching and the general attitude of the community toward the animal. My finest hour hasn't happened yet. Getting the issue on the front page of the Sunday Tasmania and exposing a bureaucrat for shafting the process came very close. I believe that was the day that the powers that be discovered that they were dealing with people who had the resources and drive (not to mention the balls) to expose what was going on with the so called protection of the lobsters.

I feel I am successful in making sure the plight of the freshwater lobster is never swept under the carpet and that any actions, etc. that are taken by the authorities are closely scrutinised. I feel I have succeeded in raising the profile of the lobster here in Tasmania. I believe the issues surrounding our waterways have been given much more prominence in recent years and the community has gained a greater awareness of the issues. I feel that before all this activity commenced lobsters were relatively unknown and largely uncared for. Likewise their habitat (the waterways) were nowhere near as prominent an issue as they are today. Learning the ins and outs of bureaucracy and how the system works is immensely challenging. It takes years of work to gain an understanding of this.

Learning how the media works is just as challenging. The media is the best way to get your message across and is a useful tool, however there are rarely stories released that are 100% accurate. You have to take the good with the bad with the media. Generally they mean well, but deadlines and too many stories can create a different picture than the one you wanted. Therefore you must be

concise and hammer the main point home, bit like a polly really, without losing your basic honesty.

Learning to understand what is happening and why things happen is very important. Attention to detail, especially government literature is extremely important. Understanding political speak is ultra important. I think I have achieved most of my success in face to face dealings with individuals or via the media. I'm not a strong letter writer, etc. but can talk to an audience or media person. It's difficult to measure your success really, you have wins and losses. Liken it to a war - you gain ground and lose ground. Only time will tell if there is a victory and as is the case with wars, there is never a clear winner.

Kim Eastman,

Chairperson,

Dorset Waterwatch

The Life Cycle of an Activist

If there is such a thing as a born activist I think I may fit the bill. Certainly I wore the mantle by the time I was eleven years old, when I organized a mail out survey of all school cafeterias in our district and then rallied the students to boycott our own cafeteria because they didn't serve enough hamburgers for my liking. After a week of no cafeteria sales the principal called me into his office and begged me to call it off. It worked! We wallowed in hamburgers and I had found my role – I was a leader!

I led a whole swag of protests, petitions and sit-ins through my school years but a relative calmness settled on me when I became a wife and mother with my own patch of land and river to protect and foster. It wasn't until trouble came knocking at my door which threatened that tranquillity that I came out as an adult activist. An upstream pyrethrum extraction plant, situated on the banks of the river, had a spill which saw 3,000 litres of caustic soda and pyrethrum dumped into the river, MY river, killing everything in its path to the ocean. I was incensed. I was outraged. I was back in the saddle!

At first, I chased everything. Somehow, people saw me as a leader and they came to me with all sorts of issues – aerial overspray, fish kill in a lagoon, plantation encroachment, poor roading, bad food in the tuckshop – there seemed to be nothing I wouldn't tackle. Everything outraged me. I could fight it and I could do it well. So I did it. I did it so fervently, so passionately that I burned like an incandescent flame. I burned so brightly that I was blind to the fact that people turned away from my intensity. My husband and I only conversed about the issues I was dealing with. My kids just wanted a regular mother, not one whose face showed up on the TV news. Something had to give.

I began the painful process of evaluating my effectiveness. Was I being a super-leader at the expense of everyone else around me? Did I discourage others by jumping in to do every job so well that no one else felt they had

a role? Had I given up on people, thinking they just couldn't do it as well as I could, so why bother asking? Was I creating a better, more fulfilled society, or one that was disenfranchised and relied on a few to do the work? What was I actually on about? It clearly wasn't about the issues but everything to do with who I was in the face of those issues.

With these thoughts in mind I began to seek out ways to learn new avenues of thinking. I immersed myself in learning opportunities which provided me with bigger ways of looking at issues and the people involved with them. I read papers, devoured books, attended seminars and workshops and most of all surrounded myself with people who could think outside the box. I saw that I had been confused and somewhat misguided in my scattergun approach to activism – allowing myself to be pulled in a thousand demanding directions and giving myself little time to reflect on the crucial question, "Is all this leading somewhere?" I realized that chasing every issue that crossed by radar screen took enormous energy and had made me more than a little crazy, not to mention far less effective than I would have liked to be.

Stepping into a new awareness of who I could be as an activist wasn't easy. Each step forward was preceded by some painful and often embarrassing realisation of where I had come from. But the new road was paved with absolute gems. Now, in my interactions with people I was able to recognise them for where they were at and begin to build collaborative ways forward. For the first time I became aware of the honor it was to *accompany* someone on their journey rather than lead them. Each collaboration let me witness the moment where passion and rightness melded into something far more effective – a sense of who we could be. New ways of thinking about issues emerged, new actions not thought of before were employed, new realisations of what had been achieved were recognised.

As activists we might not always appear to win, but when we step out of our comfortable lives and face huge obstacles there are enormous gains to be made on a multitude of levels. I have seen people take stock of their lives through the challenges they have faced and find freedom and direction where before there had been chaos. I have witnessed a person's incredible satisfaction in putting pen to paper and publishing a structured, well-grounded argument after a year of hard work. I have been honoured

to witness a person build bridges in the relationships in their life as a result of being committed to something much bigger than themselves.

As an activist I am a world away from where I started. As a human working with other humans it just might not get better than that.

Lesley Nicklason,

Friends of the Blue Tier

My Progression into Activism

In 1993 a large beef producing farm above my home was sold to a private timber company. This didn't seem like a problem at first. Then we heard that the company would be aerially spraying a cocktail of chemicals on the land situated in the headwaters for the North and South George Rivers. When the local community expressed concern about the spraying we were ignored by the company and the spraying went ahead. As a result of the spraying water courses were contaminated with, among other chemicals, Atrazine – a chemical banned in many countries. It was all downhill from here. Next we learned that plantations were chemical dependant, used vast amounts of water and destroyed diversity as understorey is often replaced with invasive weeds!

This was the start of 15 years of lobbying for the protection of our watercourses, native wildlife and forests. I soon realised that what seemed to me to be valid reasons for protecting the natural environment were going to be dismissed not just by the companies responsible, but all levels of Government. It appeared that Environment Ministers seemed not to care for the Environment and Forestry Ministers were only interested in supporting logging / woodchipping.

I have lived in the Pyengana Valley in northeast Tasmania for most of my life and feel a great connection with this place. I cannot sit back and let this place be destroyed by companies that care only for money and power, driven by greed. This situation is replicated in rural communities all over Tasmania.

Over the years I have learned a great deal about how the environment works which has led to a greater desire to bring about change in how our natural environment is managed. After conducting many information forums, attending endless meetings, making countless submissions and finally being arrested attempting to halt logging in our local water catchment, I now focus on building community support by conducting bushwalks in threatened and protected areas to give people an "on the ground" look at the problems we face. I have found this to be very successful as participants then make up their own minds about the

environment – and 100% of the thousand or so people I have taken on educational bushwalks agree that what is happening to the natural environment is a disgrace and they are determined to do their own lobbying.

I have undertaken training in environmental presentations, but one highlight has been completing *The Climate Project* (TCP) training with Al Gore. The climate crisis covers all environmental issues and giving TCP presentations rolls all the issues into one. At the same time it provides people with ideas for positive actions they can take in relation to reducing their environmental impact.

The biggest challenge I think that most conservationists / activists face is being discredited, ignored, dismissed, criticised, belittled, etc. by Government Ministers and company representatives. I now simply expect to be referred to as “a front for the Greens”, a “scare-monger” and a “trouble maker”! This is of little consequence as I firmly believe that the very least we can do for our children, their children and the magnificent wildlife that live here is to leave them a clean, habitable environment.

Pete Godfrey,

Forestry Activist

Summary of Activist Activities

I have been a greenie now for many years. I first moved to the bush at 20 where I built a timber slab hut, spent my days gardening, surfing and getting used to living by myself. I was an introverted, pensive person. Finding a passion for the planet has changed that. I used to be the token greenie at work trying to counteract the greed, lies and normal way of seeing the planet as a place put here for us to plunder.

I moved to Tasmania to live about 6 years ago, with the foolish thought that I would come here to an incredibly beautiful place to live a semi-retired life of peace and introspection, spending my time surfing, walking and meditating. That lasted about a year, then what I saw happening to the land just drove me to stand up and as I call it "put my head above the parapet". My life was no longer about me but about protecting Tasmania for all who will come after me.

The defining event for my activism was a friend turning up one day distraught that her dog would most likely die from the effects of a 1080 baiting operation that was to be carried out near her place. I saw red and told her that it was not going to happen without a major fight. I just could not sit back and allow those innocent and beautiful animals to be killed so a few stupid weeds could grow.

So I printed a simple flyer and distributed it myself to letterboxes within about 10 kilometres of the drop zone, suggesting that if people weren't happy they should ring the number on the flyer and tell the forestry company that they didn't want the animals poisoned or their pets lives threatened in that way. After 3 days of constant phone calls we were informed by the company representative that "It is legal and we are going to do it anyway". From that day I have been fully engaged in the fight for the forests of Tassie.

I have spent the last 4 years now surveying forest coupes and writing reports on my findings. The reports include letters to the Forest Practices Authority outlining the issues that I have identified, their replies, scientific papers that pertain to the area and the issues and letters to and

from politicians. My aim is to show the system for the sham it is and to make sure that those responsible know that they are being watched. To this end I have studied for countless hours. To have a credible presence and to be taken seriously is a long process, especially when I am not a scientist or a university graduate.

I spend 20 to 30 hours a week working on environmental issues, studying scientific papers on hydrology, geology, karst, landslips, soils and botany. I have studied the laws and regulations of the forest practices system, laws to do with spraying chemicals, EMPCA and the EPBC, the Australian Forestry Standard, the effects of exposure to chemicals and so much more that I cannot name them all. Most of the legal stuff I have read is written to give the developers a way to avoid being fined.

Still I have managed to get the Forest Practices Authority to fine several forestry companies as well as require one company to do some pretty extensive remedial work.

Finest hours are difficult to define. I see all the work I do as informing people and helping communities to fight against the destruction of their natural environment.

I count all the work I do as a win. If I tangle up one of the company people by them having to write to me then they have less time to carry out the activities I see as damaging. When they have to do coupe tours with the Forest Practices Authority or their Auditors under the Australian Forestry Standard, or a government representative quizzes them, I feel that I am winning as I am putting pressure on them to be responsible for their actions.

When I am asked to speak at a community meeting and to explain to them what is happening to the forests around their area I feel that my work is worth it. I can explain to people what can be done and give them information so they can make up their own minds. The role of information provider is the most satisfying part of my activism, I like being able to help communities to be more informed.

Some of the best experiences I have had from being an activist are the people who I meet. I love meeting people who are inspired, who are passionate and deeply caring about their environment, the future and the other creatures that we share the world with. I feel that my work is for

them, I would love to die knowing that I did my best to leave a small part of the planet a better place for the children, animals and plants that live there!

Francis Coghlan,

Peace Activist

Presidential thoughts on Community Based Auditing or My Tango with CBA

I will try and give you my thoughts on CBA, I have thought about it quite a lot during the time I've been associated with the idea. Loved the idea when first I heard it and thought it would be the go. In practice though I think it is very difficult to navigate.

It's a big call because firstly, the aim is to catch the government out through their own law. I believe that the system is so contaminated by self interest and ego it amazes me anything gets done at all. It's a testimony to the hearts of the 'good people' who faithfully do a good days work under impossible conditions. I think Community Based Auditing is a "Grand Idea" but the system is not really interested in someone else's grand ideas challenging them. You are immediately at logger heads with huge numbers of people who are paid money to shoot holes in you personally, denigrate your material and can spend months, if need be, driving around in company cars having a wonderful time achieving this end.

Second, to find out in the wilds of Tasmania, or any country/remote area, such qualified people I feel is difficult. One really needs to be of an intellectual/business/university type mind to put the auditing process together. When Lesley and I first looked at the audit for the Blue Tier we were thoroughly stumped. I know Lesley credits me with some of the audit but at that very moment my mother commenced her 4 month slide towards death and I left it with Lesley. She continued by herself and struggled with it immensely, without Kim's help she would never have been able to complete it. I can't imagine doing it, it's like university, when I briefly flirted with the idea 10 years ago, after one unit I felt like someone had strapped me up in a straight jacket and each sentence pulled the strings tighter.

So, not only do you have to have special people creating the audit but these special people have to be prepared to put huge chunks of their life on hold while they race around the hills policing the system and stretching the mind and thinking processes to cracking point for a

completely altruistic reason. I have watched the affect this has had on three people who really went to the ropes and would not have got it together without huge assistance. It definitely changed and grew them in very positive ways and all three of them say this has been a transformative process for them personally, but what about the next time? There won't be a next time because they have done it once and reaped the benefits and that's the sum of it.

About 5 years ago members of the Friends of the Blue Tier group decided to draw a line in the sand and blockaded a coupe in the Groome River catchment, drawing attention to the critical nature of the water in the entire catchment. We had a very transformative experience, grew closer and dearer to each other, lived among the bush closely for a whole month, and put our lives on hold with only the most essential things getting done. It was hard, happy, hippy, hopeful, ho hum.....after a month Forestry moved in with the police and kicked us out. Ten people chose to get arrested to continue drawing attention to the water catchment issue, they went to court, were given a warning, the coupe was clearfelled and burnt.

Next Lesley and I went to Canberra, country moused our way through the corridors of power in Canberra. We felt grateful when some 'politician' listened to our story. I nearly lost two fingers in the toilet next to Eric Abetz's office, (Yikes!! I am eternally grateful for that narrow escape!). We flew home to Tassie and John Howard was triumphantly elected with much assistance from the Tasmanian Timber Industry. At this point I thought 'I'm wasting my time' which had been my husband's gentle mantra for years. Throughout my life in times like this I have called upon an old friend, a Chinese oracle, the *I Ching*. "Can I please have direction and guidance on this whole issue". The line that still resonates in my heart was this "the servant cannot prevent the Master from action by holding onto his leg". RIGHT! Head so close to other foot and in fine head kicking position. I let go, sent love and kisses to the log truck drivers, philosophically noted that today was the day for all those wallabies, wombats, native cats and possums to move on, stopped listening to Tim Cox, etc. I have never been able to stop listening to the news or watching TV but I fantasise about it.

And this brings me to my point on being. I personally find it impossible to oppose the system, which is what auditing is, and remain in a state of

peace and love. Once there is a 'them' it's on, and no matter how I try I cannot remain centred in that state. It is a constant exercise of detachment that I'm sure will continue to my dying breath, but I know that I must keep away from 'us the enlightened ones' and 'them the opposition' to maintain my personal state of harmony. As for the ordinary folk, when they are ready to understand and act upon their understanding it will happen for them, I don't feel I have a mission to enlighten or teach them, reach them or in any way rev them to be other than they are. I only have to be responsible for how I act and all else flows from that.

Everyone has their calling and passion which defines their life, but I do believe that the state of peace and love is a prescription for everyone, and how we go about that is our own personal movement towards Being. There are few people who understand that the whole of this planet/universe is an interconnected whole - we are breathing air and drinking water that has been here from the beginning. I think about it as the 10 - 15% conundrum. Ian and I often talk about it, that the hopeful end is 15% of people prepared to pour out their energy to hopefully 'save' the environment. It goes with the percentage of people who vote green.

We are all connected in a universal mind too, so if I'm a little positive cell in the whole and radiate light (positive happiness) to my greatest potential then the cells around me will connect with that light and shine brighter too. The question as to why only 15% of people see the bigger picture is one to ponder till death, but if education was truly given to enlighten and inform surely we would have no problem. Why the education of the people is so lacking in real knowledge is another question that probably draws in 'dark forces' and other nebulous characters from fact and fiction.....I'll leave it there!!

I finish with a fabulous quote from Oscar Wilde which won the Quote of the 20th Century Competition - "To be sane one must disagree with 90% of the British public". Obviously the competition panel was stacked - somewhere, somehow the 15% triumphed!!

Phil Tattersall,

Board member,

Tasmanian Community Resource Auditors Inc.

A Story of Change

Introduction

I have come to realize that the first steps towards improving practice must start with a critical examination of our own values, biases and relationships. In other words we must come to know our individual paradigms. This is the only way any of us can have any real chance to change ourselves. In undertaking our own transformation we are more able to see that possibility in others from who we also learn and gain valuable insight and spiritual nourishment. In this sense no one person has *the* key; rather we all hold bits of a never ending puzzle. Realizing this is a vital key in itself – a kind of universe within a universe!

My early Life – *an Inuit in the Sahara*

I spent most of my early life (1958 - 1974) in the rural midlands of northern Tasmania. My family lived on a large 4,000 acre grazing property. My father was ambitious and determined. His dream was to breed top class Polwarth sheep. He began work on the farm as a gardener and odd job man, and by the mid 1960s he had worked his way up to the rank of overseer, in charge of the property's prominent stud flock. He was a loyal and obedient servant. The owner's word was usually law and having worked very hard in his younger days he knew every detail of his farm.

I attended the local district school and during weekends and holidays I was expected to work some of the time on the farm. I was paid 50 cents per hour. I was always "on call" and remember feeling that I was being controlled – and I didn't like it! My father was 'head of the house' and his word was usually final. He had firm views on everything, just like his father before him. As a youngster I couldn't believe that people could be 'this right' all the time. From the age of 13, I used to 'buck the system'; every mealtime there would be arguments: religion, politics, science, the environment; on the list would go.

I left school in 1971 in Year 10. My passions were chemistry and environmental issues. I wanted to play some role in stopping pollution, an aim

spurred on when I read *Silent Spring*. I had arguments with the owner of the farm over worker exposure to organophosphate jetting fluid and the fate of runoff from the dip yards. The owner told my father to tell me to "keep my mouth shut or else ... " Looking back, I guess I was bucking against the dominant paradigm: "Do what I say or I'll punish you..." As a young scientist I felt very strongly about my responsibilities to society. I reasoned that if my experiences were typical then things were very serious indeed. My views about science and social responsibility were reinforced on seeing 'The Ascent of Man' (Bronowski 1973, ABC TV, 1972/73). Jacob Bronowski's words still ring in my ears: "Science is knowledge, not certainty." This had a big influence on my thinking and intellectual development.

An Activist in the Making

By 1980 I had begun to work with groups and individuals, much of the time supporting them in their fights over pollution issues such as aerial spraying, runoff from tips, and contaminated foods. By the late 1980's I had developed a system to help people to generate objective evidence to support their arguments: it was called Community Based Sampling (CBS). I also co-coordinated the Tasmanian Toxics Action Network (TAN) with Sandy Tiffin and Kate Short. The Network would organise anything from CBS workshops and support for court cases to on-site protests. At that time I was a scientist-as-activist working out of my consultancy, Soil Tech Research, which also advised farmers on farm planning, soil sampling and analysis as well as environmental audits.

By 1987 I was concerned about the direction and future of agriculture. All the farmers I talked to were similarly concerned about their futures. I conducted farmer surveys in the northern Midlands and found the same thing. I could not see how prescription agriculture could deliver the urgent solutions and new pathways so eagerly sought. We always seemed to be flat-out solving the problems caused by our previous actions. In short, I sensed crisis in my practice.

During 1989 to 1992 I began to wrestle with what I termed the 'narrowness' of our practice. It seemed that as activist or consultant there was always a focus on 'the problem' and 'the solution' (magic bullet solutions). We always seemed to be working on the symptoms and not the causes, always reacting and never being proactive. I remember feeling a deep personal tension and inadequacy - as though I was, somehow, part of the problem. The opportunity for change came in 1993.

My Worldview is challenged

During 1993 I took on the Graduate Diploma in Sustainable Agriculture (GDSA) with Orange Agricultural College, graduating in 1994. I wanted to find ways to measure the sustainability of agricultural systems, thinking that this would help me become a 'better' consultant. I met Professor Stuart Hill at Orange Agricultural College and through him began to realize that if we were to change agriculture we must first look critically at ourselves. This realization was a shock: the 'objective, impartial' scientist having to change *himself/herself* to improve their practice! This philosophy, though, was very much at the heart of the GDSA. My journey had begun. During the period of my studies I was able to confront my worldview and at the same time question how I come to know. How did I learn and take action in the world? Why did I think and act the way I did? What did my paradigm look like?

I soon found that my upbringing and early life experiences had had a profound impact on the way I perceived both the human and natural worlds. For instance, in my rush to get on with the job I would fail to fully reflect on the consequences of my actions. I also found that I was very good at analysing but very poor at synthesis. My paradigm saw analysis as a more passive and less assertive activity than synthesis. These turned out to be metaphors for deconstructing (analysis) and constructing (synthesis). I had used deconstruction as a way of coping with the oppressiveness during my early life. Once I saw the need for change I began the search for a bridge.

Learning Style the Key To Further Growth

It was quite a shock to learn that I had to do a lot of learning about learning! During my studies I came upon something called the Learning Style Inventory. Each of us has a particular way of knowing, an approach that we unconsciously favour or prefer. Most of us gravitate to jobs, relationships and whole careers as a result of our learning style. Once we know our style we can change our approach to the way we think and act in, and our impact on, the world (if we wish). For instance, I came to understand that highlighting the difficulties and problems in the world was only one part of improving the situation. By developing a more balanced approach I could play a more positive role in facilitating change. For this to happen I would need to be able to accommodate many differing world views and perceptions. I would also need to accept that there are many ways of knowing, and that *objective* scientific knowledge was only one way of knowing. A great weight had been lifted from me. I began to see how my practice could be improved.

Truth - A Private Thing

Once I had completed my learning style diagnosis I began to immerse myself in situations and experiences I would normally feel uncomfortable with. Having come from a 'hard' sciences background I found this part of the project very difficult. Slowly I began to see and value people's subjective judgments as just as 'valid' as objective truth. As I experienced more and more of the subtleties and nuances of human systems I could see that much of what Stuart Hill and others were suggesting made more and more sense: "truth" is a very personal thing. People see the world through the filters of their own worldview.

'So what' for my Mission?

By 1995 I had moved into what I term the 'design phase' of my life. I had spent many years acting on what was wrong with systems, and now I felt I could move to a position where I could explore pathways to righting some of those wrongs. This took me into the human side of the sustainability question.

I wanted to explore the way humans interacted with farming systems. This local knowledge was an important source of information when it came to finding out about the meaning and measurement of farm sustainability: I wanted to explore the world of the farmer. I did this in the context of a Masters research degree. 1995 was spent developing my ideas about ways to tackle the task. By early 1996 I identified my research methodology as well as five dairy farming families from high input to organic-sustainable who were willing to participate in a two year project. We explored the meaning and measurement of sustainability. It was a rich and fulfilling experience that left me empowered and a much-changed¹ consultant.

My work as an activist on the Exeter tip pollution problem and numerous other environmental issues around that State was very much benefited by the process of deep learning. By the end of 1996 I had begun to wrestle with ways in which I could influence long term change, rather than have to fight each issue, following an all too familiar pattern of intervention that saw citizens

¹ If we are truthful, our journeys are like mosaic art works: winding, semi-rational, eclectic. Those many years enduring the dialectic tension between activist and scientist were really a period of incubation leading to an inquiry which led, ultimately, to a deep questioning of my paradigm. I was 'released' when I accepted that I could critically learn about my learning. It was only then that I could understand those 'hurts' and their significance.

playing their well scripted role of 'receivers of goods and services', i.e. client. It seemed to me that in general, citizens sat there waiting to be 'told'. There was (is) an expectation (held by all players) that the role of citizens is not to probe or question. They were there to be lectured at, advised, told and asked to give 'feed-back' (Dakin 2003) by a whole host of experts and authorities, few of who were fully accountable to the citizenry. I reasoned that it was the citizenry who were paying and were ultimately responsible when things went wrong (e.g. our taxes paid to Landcare and outcomes of the Regional Forest Agreements).

In my advocacy work with citizens I soon found many of my concerns were confirmed and that citizens were not happy with many of the decisions made on their behalf. In my daily work as an activist and advocate I sensed crisis. I could see that socioeconomic and cultural forces within the Tasmanian context had established a condition whereby the environment movement, including the activists were somehow disconnected from *ordinary* Tasmanians. As a result I felt that the prospects for fundamental change were limited. For its part the environment movement saw change as involving more of the same, namely push harder to overcome the forces of resistance. This involved using traditional methods of activism that no longer seemed to fit into the social and cultural context of Tasmania. Something more was needed if we were to establish a permanent partnership with ordinary Tasmanians rather than the fleeting coalitions of convenience that had been evident in the past.

An Important Realization – The Problem of Activism

My desire to move beyond "No!"

Much of what the environment movement is advocating is based on stopping what it sees as irresponsible 'development', where the word most often used is "No!". Activists use emotive messaging to great effect in an attempt to bring attention to issues of concern. The targets of protest are decision-makers and citizens, particularly those who may have an attachment to the issues of concern. Traditionally the choices have been simple: *"if this development goes ahead we will lose such and such species...and/or the land will be damaged beyond repair"*.

In recent years there have not been the spectacular results achieved by the environment movement in the past. Since the successes of the Franklin and Wesley Vale campaigns here in Tasmania there have been few real 'wins' despite the large number of environmental issues and campaigns

now running in the state. The huge uproar over forest destruction, loss of water (quantity and quality), the prospect of the introduction of genetic engineering technology, and what some argue to be the unfettered expansion of the forest plantation industry now feature as key issues in Tasmania.

My main area of interest is natural resource management, which includes forests, soil, water, fauna, flora, and human communities. My work within communities has revealed deep concerns over the way our resources are managed and it is clear that governments and industry dismiss much of the time legitimate community concerns almost out of hand. In fact, citizens are offered little opportunity to play any meaningful role beyond that of 'sounding board' or perhaps involvement as part of meeting legal obligations on the part of project proponents.

What seems to be missing is some way to bring concerned community members into processes where their voices can be clearly heard. My experience with community groups shows that if given the opportunity citizens will engage and push their concerns, even though there is shyness and hesitancy to speak out. For their part, activist groups, through their actions and political allegiances, have tended to cut themselves off from the average citizen²; the very ones that movement needs to have on side. In a sense then, citizens have become caught between a 'rock and a hard place': on the one hand a lack of confidence to come forward as activists in their own right, while on the other a fear of being labelled as "radical" or "greenie"³.

In my view, the environment movement has not recognised these dilemmas and so remains the self-appointed advocate for the environment and is, in a sense, isolated. As a result, it is unclear whether in fact it has a mandate to act behalf of the community⁴ *in toto*. In my view, all of this has an impact on how community members see activism and the institutions (including political) who support them.

² Conversations with citizens reveal comments such as, "they are okay, but they go too far..." and "the problem is they are always talking up the negatives...you never hear any positives, only what's wrong"

³ In some communities citizens who do 'show their hand' can be dealt with quite harshly. There are stories of people being ostracized, threatened and physically assaulted. I know from personal experience what being labelled as a "greenie" can be like. Also, see Flanagan (2007).

⁴ That said it is known that around 20% of the Tasmanian Public voted Green at during the last State elections. The question is how many of these people are actively involved in environmental campaigns.

There are also other issues that have come into play over recent times that in my view have also had a profound impact on the effectiveness of the approaches used by activists (and the environment movement generally⁵). First, governments and industry have come a long way since the days of the Franklin River and Wesley Vale campaigns and have spent a lot of time and effort gaining a thorough understanding of how environmental activism works. This has led to a far more sophisticated approach to dealing with issues raised by activists and the environment movement generally⁶. As well, planning and management systems have evolved to a new level of complexity and sophistication, where nearly all development plans must now have an Environmental Impact Statement in support of an Environmental Management Plan⁷. I might add that these significant changes to "business as usual" are due at least in part to the efforts of activists in the first place! By and large, the environment movement⁸ has not been well equipped to deal with this new complexity, and it is now clear that the old 'emotive-iconic' formula no longer works. In short, activists are still 'stuck' with a "No!" approach when it comes to developments or issues with which they do not agree.

Second, there has been a subtle shift in community expectations as to what counts as a "green issue" or indeed issues worth getting hot under the collar over. Tim Doyle (2001) explains some of this in terms of what has gone on with successive federal governments who very skilfully reshaped the perceptions of environmentalism in Australia, effectively neutralizing the former power of the environment movement to sway public opinion.

⁵ The institutions and activists (including 'lone activists') that make up the 'environment movement, termed herein as 'the movement'. Activists can be advocates and facilitators (working one to one with citizens, or with groups of citizens from a platform of sole operator or within an ENGO), or play the role of 'single issue operator'. In the single or lone operator role, activists tend to work in isolation writing submissions, letters to the editor, and speaking at public gatherings in relation to their special issue. Over the years, I moved through all the stages. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses. Whelan (2002, p.10) discusses some of these matters.

⁶ Examples include information forums, leaflets and other forms of community consultation used by governments and corporations.

⁷ As I will show, having a good planning process is not the same as having a *good plan* in the first place. In my experience one often sees a really good management plan supported by a fine impact statement for a site or operation that is in the *wrong place*. Refuse disposal sites and forestry operations are two examples where I see problems time after time.

⁸ Whelan (2002) has grappled with some of these issues when researching the effectiveness of environmental advocacy. He sees opportunities in the training and educating activist and advocates. I agree. Community Based Auditing (initiated in 1999/2000) is a step in that direction.

While interest in environmental issues remains high in Australia, it is clear that the sheer number and complexity of issues has left community members swamped in 'information overload', which could partly account for the lack of direct citizen involvement in environmental issues. Given these realities activists must now work that much harder to create messages of appeal in order to capture the attention of citizens and politicians. This suggests that strategies for engagement must be much more than beginning and ending with "No!" In order to ensure relevance and credibility environmental activists must be able to demonstrate that they have the backing of communities. This is vitally important and something usually not that well attended to⁹. For me this is an important 'hot topic' for the Tasmanian environment movement - how do we get citizens involved? After all, the buck stops with them, they are the ones ultimately responsible for what goes on. As I will show, there are ways to secure citizen involvement, but they involve hard work and a commitment to innovative strategies.

Third, there appear to be fundamental flaws in the beliefs that underpin the approach (methodology¹⁰) utilized by environmental activists. It seems to me that the environment movement has become captive of the very tools and processes it is trying to change. The fact that the movement utilizes the canons of the same science upon which environmental management decisions are made is deeply problematic and is simply taking it deeper into a dilemma. New ways to challenge conventional science must be found that not only progress understanding, but also reshape the very nature of science itself.

As I see it, the dilemma in which the environment movement finds itself is the product of three primary crises, which include 1. The 'crisis of certainty', stemming from the use of reductionist science to refute the claims of the same science that is used by those it opposes. 2. The 'crisis of representation', as the movement struggles with the question of who it is representing and on what authority, and 3. The 'crisis of identity' that has arisen in the wake of the manipulation of public perceptions by

⁹ I have seen cases where a group of community activists worked hard on their issue and while ending up with a sizable public meeting failed to secure clear mandates by a recorded "show of hands". Along similar lines I have seen activist go to bat on issues without a clear directive or mandate from the community of attachment and so were not able to demonstrate a clear authority to act. Having a good argument is one thing, but even better when it is supported and indeed mandated by the community you are acting for.

¹⁰ Here methodology means the collection of methods and tools used by activists to achieve their goals.

successive federal governments regarding what it means to be 'green' or an "environmentalist", or for that matter what constitutes an environmental issue.

It seems to me that governments have woken up to the fact that the environment movement, in emulating current institutional contexts, is unwittingly supporting the causes of many of the problems it is fighting to solve. In so doing, the movement has become bogged down in bureaucratic processes that tend to stymie and perhaps prevent the development of much needed innovative change strategies capable of taking activism to a new level. In other words, the movement has not seen the need to change and as a result continues to be ripe for manipulation!

I felt that to continue operating in such a context would only serve to reinforce inadequacies in my own practice which in turn would feed into the 'greater effort', leading to further dysfunction. In short, I had to exit this self-defeating cycle where, as I saw it, my activist style was being shaped by the context in which I was operating.

So What is My Contribution to Activism Here in Tasmania?

From 1998, I began reflecting on ways to involve community directly in the resource planning process, not so much as sources of feedback and "doers" of various projects, but as actual project designers. In short, I was looking at new ways to bring community, the ultimate "responsible persons", directly into the environmental management and planning process. My own research and indeed much of the emerging literature on the subject of participation, provided keys to a possible way forward. One of the strengths of community involvement lies in the knowledge held by the community. For too long community knowledge has been considered "anecdotal" and "unscientific". The fact is that local knowledge (Harding, 1998) and community science can play a vital and important role in resource planning and action. Over the past 5 years the subject of community participation in shared decision making has taken on a new prominence (Dakin, 2003).

During 1999-2000 I had the opportunity to work on the Diddleum Plains project (Gschwendtner, Eastman, Tattersall and Mills 2000) which saw a private landholder, supported by a local Waterwatch group, raise questions about the fundamental soundness of a timber clearfell operation in the upper reaches of a water catchment. The project was an opportunity to test the ideas of community involvement out in the real world. The project began with an

examination of the forest practices plan, which in turn generated questions and thereby an ongoing process of enquiry involving many other players in the local community. The audit and enquiry teams were guided by the reality that it is the community who are the ultimate "responsible persons". At the end of the enquiry the community was able to recommend better ways to manage the forest and water resources in question, and Community Based Auditing was born (Tattersall 2007; Tattersall 2008).

Community Based Auditing continues to evolve with each and every intervention. The process, based on action research seeks inquire into problem situations with a view to changing those situations for the better. I use the terms 'problem situation' to include not only the problem at hand, but the way we go about defining and address what we believe to be the main issue. In this sense Community Based Auditing is as much about personal change as anything else. This new tradition of activism is based on Post Normal Science (Harding 1998), and I term it *Post Normal Activism*.

A Reflection

As an activist, my early experiences had an immense impact on me and led me to contemplate a change in direction during the early to mid 1990's. By 1995, I had nearly 10 years experience in environmental activism, during which I had come through one campaign lasting over 7 years. I could see many things wrong with my approach and that of the movement generally¹¹. The period 1996 to 2000 saw me crafting ideas for a new way, a new direction for activism. My experiences during that time enabled me to see that positive environmental activism must be more than "No!" and that a new way must be found if we are to help citizens become empowered change agents in their own right. Surely, this must be the aim of our collective efforts, indeed this must be the 'goal'!

In an effort to improve my effectiveness as an activist I used what I now believe were innovative strategies¹² that led to significant improvements in both my philosophical development, practice and the quality of the

¹¹ In-fighting, out of control egos, the primary drive to "stack on the evidence" as a way of winning the arguments, "just keep repeating the message until 'they' believe you", treating citizens as though they did not know what was good for them – they didn't know what was 'best', and so on....

¹² Such as Community Based Sampling and Community Based Auditing.

support I was offering citizens. I believe a 'theory'¹³, which arose during my early life experience, has played a significant role in shaping the trajectory of my development. In fact, it was not until I revisited and reflected on my earlier writings, including diaries and letters that I realized that my 'activism' had started at a very early age. As I delved deeper, it occurred to me that I needed to understand the person I had become. In short, I had to understand what led to my need to move beyond "No!". This in turn led to my reflections into the development and nature of my practice. At the same time, I felt that what I had to say might be of use to other practitioners, some of whom may also be questioning¹⁴ their direction and effectiveness. This was the bridge linking *my* crisis with that of the movement itself.

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¹³ In order to confront oppression in my early life I used exposure and trust breaking (where I felt there was *false* trust) to ignite conflict within and between people in an attempt to expose what I felt to be elitism and misuse of power. In generating conflict, I worked to create a condition of unease by locating and then questioning the beliefs of my oppressors. This I cottoned onto during my teenage years. As if by pure instinct I was able to find the raw nerve. I carried this 'theory' with me into the early years of my activist life. This later developed into a more sophisticated theory that took account of the history and political/cultural norms in Tasmania. In a sense this was similar to framework discussed by Whelan (2004, p. 159).

¹⁴ Indeed conversation with other grass roots activist did bring to light similar concern, particularly among the oppressed female activists with whom I worked.

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Sandy Tiffin,

Activist

Evolution of a Conscious Tasmanian

I was always a conservationist as far back as I can remember. I've often wondered why, but I think an idyllic Tasmanian childhood with the freedom to roam wherever I dared certainly played a big part.

I grew up in the outskirts of Glenorchy, in Brent St, and spent many days "adventuring" in the nearby bush and exploring neighbouring farms and creeks. After repeating a catechism of what we should do if we met snakes, venomous spiders, strange men, etc., we were free to stay out of Mum's hair for the day. We would build forts and fight the gang at the top end of the street, hunt for tadpoles, pick wildflowers for Mum and roam further and further "up the bush" until by the time I was fifteen, we had climbed Mt Hull and were starting to venture further afield.

During the summer, we stayed at our shack at Dodges Ferry which, like our home in Glenorchy, had been built by my Dad. He was a carpenter who came from country folk on the West Tamar. He had grown up living off the land. As a boy, the only pocket money he ever had came from selling rabbit skins. I pestered Dad to take me rabbit trapping and fishing. He took me fishing in a boat he had also built for himself. I was a tomboy, and Dad couldn't relate to a girl like me. I would spend Sunday evenings cleaning up the beach from the day trippers who would flock there on weekends, and I wasn't averse to telling people they had littered!

I loved visiting my grandparents in Beaconsfield. They were self-sufficient before it was even fashionable and there was always so much going on. When he wasn't loading apples at the Beauty Point wharf, my grandfather was a clinker boat builder. He learned the techniques from his Norwegian descended in-laws, the Westwoods, who founded the hamlet of Westwood near Hadspen. He fished for shark in the Bass Strait, and hunted kangaroo and rabbits with dogs. My favourite photo of him shows Grandpa sitting on the back porch splitting oysters with a long neck of beer beside him. I tell my friends this is what poor country folk did on Sunday afternoons.

My grandmother kept a cow and chooks and grew vegies and fruit trees. Red Cross parcels of delicious home preserves, sauces and cakes would be sent to us poor city folk on a regular basis and Nanny knitted and crocheted all our doll's clothes. In our family, you didn't buy if you could make it at home. As the youngest of two sisters, I always got the hand-me-downs. I only remember complaining once and being told there was no need to buy a new one, as we already had Carol's and we couldn't afford it, which seemed entirely rational. However, consumption had status and as the family's finances improved, I remember feeling chuffed to reflect that we had two cars, two houses and two TVs, unlike most of our neighbours.

Perhaps all these things have influenced me to be who I am today. I had an instinctual dislike of the human society I encountered in Tasmania because I couldn't understand the straitjacketed views of my elders' about girls. Despite my dislike of boys' destructiveness I concluded at an early age that I wanted the freedom that boys enjoyed but I didn't really like many of them very much. I found my natural sympathy was always for nature. I would look after the bunnies whose toes had been nipped off by the boys' traps, and lecture them on the evils of shooting birds. Hunting was for food, not play.

The Lake Pedder campaign was happening when I was at Glenorchy Primary School. I will never forget being hauled up the front of the classroom by the teacher, Mrs M¹⁵, to explain why I thought Lake Pedder should be saved, as a punishment for talking in class. After giving my speech, using arguments I had appropriated from my parents, as I realized years later, she told me curtly to sit down as what would I know anyway. I was so angry I decided never to speak to her again. Being top of the class, she couldn't do much to me, and despite all her threats, I never spoke to her again. At the same age I remember crying to my Mother that I hated school as they treated us like criminals and I wasn't one. I accused my sister of being drunk with power when Mum wasn't around and she was in charge of me. So I was interested in issues of power and truth from a young age which I think has helped me (eventually) to avoid stultifying thoughts.

Sometimes I wonder if I have the female equivalent of mild Aspergers syndrome. I could never relate to people's motivations to want control

¹⁵ First letter of surname to protect privacy.

over others. I decided early on that having people leave you alone was the main way to get on. My dog was a better companion during my shell collecting and exploring trips than children my own age. My maternal grandmother encouraged me to write to my Great Grandfather in New Zealand as she said I was a free thinker just like him. When I read Solsynitsin's, "*One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*", at age 12, I understood what had been the problem I had experienced ever since I could remember: Tasmania was effectively a concentration camp where anyone with an opinion contrary to the insular, backward mindset had to be put down. I became fascinated in early Tasmanian colonial history and prehistory, trying to understand why and how it had become that way.

In fourth year at Rosetta High School, progressive teachers organized the Interact Club and bushwalking clubs which I and my friends enthusiastically joined. I became President of the Interact Club, and organized a recycling system for the school and assisted the planting of a native garden, an entirely new concept in those days. Looking through old school magazines the other day, I was amazed to see how environmentally aware all us bushwalkers were then. The names include people who are now environmental scientists, park rangers and green business owners.

At Hobart Matriculation College I wrote my first and last political treatise on the great Australian apathy, a popular topic in the early 70's. I was personally a great joiner of things and a seeker of new experiences, so I applied and was selected to be an exchange student to the USA at age 17. I went feeling little fear and got hit over the head by jealous sisters, dysfunctional families, born again Christians and right wing 'nutters'. This, and the unexpected shock of the real USA as compared to the TV images I was so familiar with, is the only reason I can give for temporarily losing my sanity and trying to become a born again Christian. However, returning home got things back in perspective and I feel fortunate that those experiences have kept me out of the clutches (eventually) of any other belief systems for the rest of my life. I learnt many things from this pivotal experience: self reliance, trusting one's intuition, and understanding how brainwashing was done. The ignorance of the American population about Australia and the rest of the world, yet their stubborn insistence (even literally through gritted teeth) that theirs was the best country in the world, set the stage for me to study sociology, women's studies, anthropology and prehistory at Uni.

When I returned from the USA, I was so glad to be back, I joined the Wilderness Society, which had just been formed. I embraced the idea that there should be areas left aside for nature alone, because I saw humans as a destructive nuisance. I now see this as a false dichotomy which has led the environmental movement in Tasmania to a dead end, but I was merely replacing one belief system with another, as naïve young people do. I worked for the Tourism Bureau, and volunteered at the Environment Centre next door in my lunch breaks.

ANU in Canberra was a hotbed of student activism. I joined the Women on Campus feminist group, the Australian Independence Movement (AIM) and the Caving Club. I was a frequent participant at Student Council meetings, and eventually held positions like Editor of the student newspaper, *Woroni*. I'll never forget Gough Whitlam speaking to us in 'O Week', 1978, when he told us he would not talk about East Timor or the "Dismissal" two and a bit years before, only foreign relations, which he was then comfortably pursuing. As I learnt the underground history of those times through AIM and confrontation with the authorities in our regular marches on Parliament House, my interest in my studies took a back seat.

I had missed out on the occupation of the Vice-Chancellor's office in '76, two years before, but I benefited from the introduction of Women's Studies and other interdisciplinary subjects which have shaped my thinking ever since. Naïvely, we all thought we were on the cusp of great changes for the better in society; the 70's affected people like that. I realised I was an anarchist in debates with socialist friends. Centralisation of government always results in corruption. Here ends the history lesson! The closer the structures are to the individual, the greater the accountability and the less chance of major harm. The pointlessness of socialist factionalism came home when I was hassled into attending a meeting of the Socialist Workers' Party (Trotskyist). They claimed that all 8 of us were going to bring down the Fraser government! I was startled to hear that the Iranian revolution would be better for women once they were freed from the American Imperialist economic yoke. My concerns at misogyny carried out under the guise of Islamic tradition, were dismissed as irrelevant, bourgeois feminism. I squirmed out of a threatened education camp with the excuse of too many essays and breathed a 'narrow escape'.

My greatest activist moment was when I participated in the *Women Against Rape* march on Anzac Day, 1982. Sixty five of us were arrested, and 6 of us stayed in the Watch house all weekend as symbol of our non-cooperation with the authorities. I appeared in Court to answer the charges only so that I could make a speech to the court on my views of patriarchy. At the end of this I was told I could go. They didn't want to have to deal with a problem like me I assume, as those who went through the process of getting a lawyer and playing by the rules ended up with sentences! That is, until the law was repealed.

Since that enlightening episode, I have cheerfully been arrested for protesting against the flooding of the Franklin, arrested for asserting the civil rights of gays in Salamanca Place (twice), and arrested when protesting to stop logging at Warners' Sugarloaf and Mother Cummings Peak. I came through all of that without ever having been found guilty of anything. I have used the knowledge I gained in the first arrest to question police and assert my rights, which is one's best protection I feel. Treating police civilly but without fear of their authority, just as you would anyone else, is very confounding for them and a powerful psychological weapon in my experience. Any time I have stood up for myself, feeling right was on my side, I haven't been disappointed.

For all the negative things one might say about the corruption of the police force and civil institutions in Tasmania, I have usually found them civil and obliging personally. I think the funniest thing I got away with was the day we held a forest protest outside the Deloraine Community Complex while the Liberal Party was conducting its national conference there. I had brought along a saucepan and wooden spoon to bang in fine Spanish tradition so they could hear us indoors. Prime Minister John Howard gave the opening address, then shortly afterwards left in his car. Everyone rushed forward and mobbed the car. In the excitement, I managed to give the car boot a couple of good whacks with the fry pan, hoping to scare him a bit. I was then thrown back by a cop. Leaving the scene later, I had my fry pan confiscated by a local policeman who could barely conceal a smile. A year later, he rang me to say I could pick up "a certain" fry pan. He had made a report, as he was obliged to do, but as it wasn't followed up by the Commonwealth police he hadn't chased it. I firmly believe in direct action. As I used to say to others at Salamanca Place, "Come on and get arrested! It's not Chile yet!" However, our soft authoritarianism may get tougher if times become harder.

Anyway, after Uni finished , I returned to Tasmania to work as an archaeological volunteer at Port Arthur, and then got embroiled in saving the Franklin. I door knocked, something I actually enjoy, and organized protest marches and support for activists heading for the Franklin. I finally spent a week "lurking and loitering" on the Gordon River in time to get arrested on G-Day, along with hundreds of others. I firmly believe that the protest only worked because of the revolutionary commitment to process, small groups and organized non-violent training by WOMEN who made it happen. This was actually acknowledged by Bob Brown at the recent 25th anniversary celebrations.

I will never forget the feeling when I heard that Bob Hawke had won the Federal election. We were all ecstatic because he would stop the flooding, but I felt really low as I knew we had helped elect a person I had little regard for. I headed off overseas after that and by the time I got back four and a half years later he and Keating had "deregulated" the economy, investors were being exposed to shonky overseas loans and the great rip-off of the *common wealth* was well under way.

I returned to Tasmania to work in order to buy land and become self-sufficient, but ended up working for the Wilderness Society on the Douglas-Apsley campaign, the easiest and most uncontroversial campaign I ever was part of. I door knocked the whole of Bicheno, and 75% wanted it as a national park

I then worked for the Tas Conservation Trust as the office manager and fundraiser for their endangered species land conservation purchases. When Phil Hoysted resigned, I became the Co-Director with Dave Heatley for over a year. Although it was an exciting time being able to influence public opinion via the media, tackling a wide variety of issues and starting the Toxics Action Network, my over developed sense of responsibility meant that I fairly soon felt overburdened by the role. It was even being suggested that I had developed sufficient profile to stand as a support candidate with Bob Brown and then follow him into parliament when he went to the Senate. I considered it for five seconds, but my gut feeling was that wasn't where I should go. I consulted a counsellor and paid to be told the commonsense advice to either work out how to deal with my role or take the next option, which was still to be self-sufficient in the country. He made me realise my compulsion to speak out was to really enjoy the attention which I had been denied as a

child when my family wearied of my chatter. Feelings of guilt and playing out one's own pathologies are not good reasons for doing something.

My partner Gary was an enthusiastic supporter of the alternative life style, so we decided to start looking for a property. We looked down the Channel and around Cygnet but everything was relatively expensive. We were seeking a good community as well so started looking around Deloraine. I then had a vivid dream where I saw a village below a mountain with the sun setting behind it. I was walking up a steep hill with a dog, looking down on a small white farmhouse below. Shortly afterwards we went to a property on Jacky's Marsh Rd, Meander which sounded like just what we were looking for, and I realised it was the one in the dream.

Everything happened very quickly after that, and within eight weeks, by Christmas Eve, we had sold the Fern Tree house and were living in Meander.

Over the next four years I learnt heaps about animal husbandry, house renovating, food growing and preserving, Biodynamics, fencing, spinning, tanning and everything you would need to know to survive. It was wonderful, but I also felt an increasing need to escape Tassie again. Although feeling guilty at "dropping out" from mainstream political involvement in "saving the world" in order to take the soft option of hippy living, I had wanted to be involved in positive consciousness raising, through living a life of low consumption and being involved with the organic agriculture movement. But I wanted to do more. I spent a lot of time rethinking the problem of how to be involved. I could not participate in the old confrontational politics any more.

I regularly held Re-evaluation Co-Counselling (self directed therapy for activists) sessions with a friend who lent me Fran Peavy's *Heart Politics*. This was a whole new way of looking at things: saving the world as if people really mattered, is what I call it. It was certainly different to the "people as problem" point of view of the wilderness movement. I then tried out some "deep questioning" and suggestions of cooperative work we could do to help solve the problem of 1080 baiting in Jacky's Marsh, only to be met with silent ostracism, or screamed abuse, which was a bit of a shock. In fact the personal behaviour of the conservationists was so bad, and their tactics so unhelpful in the overall goal, that I finally

realised I had very little in common with people I thought were part of my community.

With the breakdown of my relationship with Gary, I could see no place for me here, and needed to get out and breathe a change of air. I thought my heart would break having to leave the little farm I had worked so hard to create, but I was also excited to go to a Heart Politics conference, and planned to WWOOF, and learn lots more about Permaculture.

At the Heart Politics conference, I organized an impromptu session on authoritarianism in the green movement. It created a bit of interest, and I wrote a paper based on my Tasmanian experiences, and those of other, particularly women, friends who had become disillusioned with the *modus operandi* of the "movement" in Tasmania. I recognized that the people's movement which had made the Franklin such a success had degenerated, as popular movements always seem to do, down to a few authoritarian people, largely men, and those women who would not see that their well meant cooperative attitude that bordered on martyrdom for the cause, was being exploited by those higher up the food chain. These women considered lack of personal empowerment in the movement as a necessary part of the faith.

The success of the Franklin came as a result of complex social forces through the anti war and peace movements. However, real chance for social change in order that a Franklin would never happen again was lost in a belief that the leaders could marshal the troops to the cause of their choosing as they saw fit, while the political economic argument was lost in misty photos of wilderness to soothe and woo the middle classes. When I was told years later that one of my workers at the Longford Tip was a bulldozer driver on the West Coast at the time and had felt very angry at the protesters, I quite sympathized. I realised at Uni that I was not an aspiring middle class person, looking for a nice career to afford expensive wilderness holidays like my friends. Rather, that I believed in permanent evolution, or revolution.

I went to one last meeting of the Wilderness Society to ask them whether what they were doing was empowering or disempowering the potential supporters, or really getting them anywhere, but only a few people got it.

The Deloraine Environment Centre was in disarray when I returned, due to the embezzlement of Forest Festival funds and the subsequent death of

the Festival Coordinator, Simon Graves. I put my mediation skills to good use bringing the warring factions together in order to at least sort out the financial mess. I foolishly persisted in being involved with this group for some time, but gave up due to the controlling tactics and narrow mindedness of some in the core group.

I decided to turn my energies to the organic agriculture movement again, as feeding the world into the future seemed the most important problem to be thinking about, and environmental activism was too hard. You would have to fight everyone, including the greenies, to make any headway there! I worked for Elgaar Farm for a year, then began a sustainable agriculture graduate diploma through Orange Ag College while working at tips in the Northern Midlands to help support myself. I then started my business Eco Logic Tasmania (motto: From oxymoron to reality), whose plan was to sell useful plants and do Permaculture designs, teach courses etc. Well, even though it began there, I realised that it would be slim pickings if I pursued this avenue, so increased working at the tip until I became manager, then took over the operation under my business name.

I then began having delusions of grandeur, thinking I would be able to branch out into a paper factory recycling waste paper with hemp fibre to create a sustainable paper supply, getting into commercial composting and other projects to create the "natural capitalist" future I now thought could be the way to go. I then received a rude shock: my office assistant had obtained the contract on the tips under my nose. There I was in Hobart participating in the launch of "Tasmanians for Transparency", while my livelihood was being removed from under me. Anyway, I realised what a silly, idealist chump I had been, with delusions of being the green, ethical employer!

My disillusionment with "The Movement" and the types of personally unaware people who end up in positions of control, and dictate the approach to any issue, meant that I had to become an individual activist, and that is where I am today. I decided not to vote in the Federal election in 2002, and to use my media skills to talk about the fact that either Labor or Liberal were going to send us to war with Iraq, and I would not effectively rubber stamp it. When my dog was poisoned by a farmer using 1080, I decided to use my situation to highlight the issue for people's dogs, as a good tactical exercise in the then active campaign to

ban 1080. Ironically it happened in Jacky's Marsh, but I made sure Rags' death was not in vain, and many people approached me with concern following those media appearances, and I'm sure it was another nail in the coffin. Shortly afterwards, further restrictions were placed on farmers, but the battle is far from over yet.

There is no hope of the intellectual/spiritual/emotional evolution necessary for us to deal with the crisis brought about by multinational capitalism if we think that the answers are within the systems that gave us the problems in the first place, if you know what I mean. If there is not an honest self examination and desire to accept one's personal responsibility in this mess, in one's own life and relationships, how can we begin to create a sustainable world?

Sometimes I feel all I have learnt in the last 30 or so years is to recognize how most groups have no future because of a lack of personal awareness, and to get out quickly before you waste too much time and emotional energy. I spent years in TWS, but now I can see it in a matter of hours!

Following the internet exposure of the "Climategate" emails, which began the public humiliation of the fabricated Anthropogenic Global Warming hoax, the response from the Green movement has been absolute silence. Except for uninterrupted blathering on the need to tax carbon polluters, and reduce one's "carbon footprint", there has not been one crack in the official, political rhetoric. I now understand how conservationists have become merely patsies of the Elites who control us, and I refuse to be associated with them. I attempted a small psychological exercise by contacting a number of "green" organisations and colleagues to ask what they were going to do now new information had come to light. The responses ranged from the bleatings of frightened rabbits to the denial of sociopaths. I have been censored, ridiculed, abused and hung up on, which just goes to show the depth of the problem that has become the "Green Movement".

When CO₂, vital to all plant life, and therefore to us, has been reclassified as a pollutant and corporate criminals are heroes, you know that 1984 was a long time ago. Still, it makes life simpler to finally understand the mentality of the people one is dealing with and to stay away. I'm glad I'm becoming more self-sufficient and I'm on the Net because the next few years are going to be interesting and I like to watch.

Part 2 The Broader Issues of Activism

Brian Martin¹⁶

Academic and researcher

Activism, social and political

Activism is action on behalf of a cause, action that goes beyond what is conventional or routine. The action might be door-to-door canvassing, alternative radio, public meetings, rallies, or fasting. The cause might be women's rights, opposition to a factory, or world peace.

Activism has played a major role in ending slavery, challenging dictatorships, protecting workers from exploitation, protecting the environment, promoting equality for women, opposing racism, and many other important issues. Activism can also be used for aims such as attacking minorities or promoting war.

Activism has been present throughout history, in every sort of political system. Yet it has never received the same sort of attention from historians as conventional politics, with its attention to rulers, wars, elections, and empires. Activists are typically challengers to policies and practices, trying to achieve a social goal, not to obtain power themselves. Much activism operates behind the scenes.

There are many varieties of activism, from the face-to-face conversations to massive protests, from principled behavior to the unscrupulous, from polite requests to objectionable interference, and from peaceful protests to violent attacks. Activism is not well defined, so different people often have somewhat different ideas of what constitutes activism.

Activism is not necessarily a good thing or a bad thing. It all depends on the cause and the actions, and a person's judgment of what is worthwhile. One person might say that a protest is a valuable defense of freedom and another person might say that it is a dangerous attack on human rights.

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Activism and Conventional Politics

Activism is action that goes beyond conventional politics, typically being more energetic, passionate, innovative, and committed. In systems of representative government, conventional politics includes election campaigning, voting, passing laws, and lobbying politicians. Action outside of these arenas includes neighborhood organizing, protest marches, and sit-ins. The boundary between activism and conventional politics is fuzzy and depends on the circumstances.

Action on behalf of special causes such as animal rights or anti-abortion goes beyond conventional politics. Sometimes, though, political parties are set up to promote special causes, such as labor parties in many countries in the 1800s and early 1900s or green parties since the 1960s. In this way activism becomes conventional politics.

Often activism and conventional politics operate side by side, such as the labor movement - including unions and rank-and-file activities - alongside a labor party, or the environmental and peace movements alongside a green party.

It is also possible to speak of activism inside an organization, such as a corporation, government department, political party, or labor union. Organizations have their usual ways of doing things, such as senior executives making decisions in corporations. If employees organize to challenge a decision or try to alter the usual decision-making process, this can be called activism, though it is much less visible than activism in public places.

What counts as activism depends on what is conventional. In societies in which free speech is respected and protected, making a posting on an e-mail list complaining about the government is a routine occurrence. But in a dictatorship, such a posting might be seen as subversive and both the sender and list manager might be punished. Similarly, when strikes are banned, going on strike is a more daring form of activism than when they are legal and routine.

Activism is typically undertaken by those with less power, because those with positions of power and influence can usually accomplish their aims using conventional means. But sometimes those in positions of power might be called activists, when they go beyond normal expectations, such

as an "activist president" who pushes through an ambitious agenda or an "activist court" that interprets the law in new ways. Most of the entries in this encyclopedia, though, are about activism from below, often called grassroots activism.

Methods of Activism

The most common image of activism is a public protest, such as a rally, march, or public meeting. This is a useful starting place in looking at methods of activism.

Researcher Gene Sharp divides the methods of nonviolent action into three main types. First are methods of protest and persuasion, such as speeches, slogans, banners, picketing, protest disrobings, vigils, singing, marches, and teach-ins. To count as nonviolent action - and activism - these need to go beyond conventional behavior. Singing in a choir is not activism, but singing as a protest, for example in a prison or in a church, certainly can be.

The second type of nonviolent action is noncooperation, such as religious excommunication, disobeying social customs, protest emigration, rent strike, producers' boycott, withdrawal of bank deposits, international trade embargo, and a wide variety of strikes. The third type is intervention, including sit-ins, nonviolent occupations, guerrilla theater, fasting, and setting up alternative economic and political institutions. All of these, and more, can be methods of activism - of the nonviolent variety.

Another option is violent action, such as beatings, imprisonment, torture, killing, and bombing. Conventional violent action is carried out by police and military forces. Violent activism would be carried out by those not authorized to do so, who might be called freedom fighters or terrorists. However, this is usually called armed struggle rather than activism.

In between nonviolent action and armed struggle is violence against physical objects, of which sabotage is one variety. This can include damaging a pipeline, destroying genetically engineered crops, or defacing a website. These are activism if done on behalf of a cause. Like other forms of activism, sabotage can be praised or condemned. The Boston Tea Party, a signal event during the American Revolution, involved economic sabotage.

The methods of activism will continue to evolve along with political opportunity and developments in culture and technology. To challenge consumer culture, for example, a new practice has developed called culture jamming, involving a transformation of conventional symbols, such as those used in advertisements, to create a new, confronting message. Cell phone messaging systems are now used to organize rallies. Online activism, called cyberactivism, involves using the Internet to communicate and organize traditional actions and as a direct form of activism itself, such as bombarding a website or sending large files to slow down a system.

Groups and Movements

Many activists are members of groups, which can be small or large, local or global. By operating in groups, activists gain several advantages. They can undertake larger tasks, such as organizing a city-wide campaign. They can benefit from specialization, such as when one person responds to queries, another sets up a website, another handles memberships, and yet another talks to the media.

Another vital function of groups is to provide mutual support. Many activists lose heart or burn out through constant struggle and slow progress. Working with others can give a feeling of solidarity and often leads to lasting friendships.

Most people who join activist groups do so because they are invited by someone already involved. Groups serve personal and social purposes as well as getting tasks done.

A century ago, nearly all activist groups operated face-to-face, with coordination between groups via visits, the postal system, and public notices. The telephone allowed rapid coordination across greater distances and the Internet has made it much easier to coordinate globally.

Activist groups, like groups of any kind, from families to corporations, can have problems, including miscommunication, personal animosities, and power struggles. Getting group members to work well together is vital. Skills like listening, summarizing, and conflict resolution are called maintenance functions, whereas skills for undertaking action outside the group are called task functions.

Many small activist groups are made up entirely of volunteers. Large groups often have some paid staff plus many volunteers. International activist organizations like Amnesty International or Friends of the Earth are made up of numerous local groups, with some paid staff in national or international offices.

Paid activists seldom receive a large salary, though there are exceptions. Because they are committed to a cause, activists are often willing to work at much lower wages than if they took a conventional job. The term "professional activist" can apply to a paid staff member but also - sometime pejoratively - to volunteers who spend so much time doing activism that they are as experienced as a full-time worker.

The easiest way to learn how to be an activist is to join a group and become involved. There are few courses in educational institutions about activism, and even fewer teaching in practical skills. Some activist groups run training sessions for their members and others, but most learning occurs on a person-to-person basis, through direct instruction, learning by imitation, and learning by doing. This is supplemented by manuals on community organizing, campaigning, nonviolent action, and other skills, with an ever-growing amount of material available online.

Groups are the main way that activists are organized to get tasks done. In many cases, groups are part of what is called a social movement. A social movement typically includes many groups and individuals acting towards a common goal to change society in a particular way. A movement is broader than any single organization and it has a broader, less precise vision than most groups.

The peace movement, for example, includes a wide variety of groups, including local groups campaigning on a single issue such as against a particular war, national groups with an agenda such as nuclear disarmament, professional networks such as Physicians for Social Responsibility, and international organizations such as War Resisters' International. The peace movement also contains a diversity of general themes, such as opposition to wars and inhumane weapons.

Within any movement, there can be many different beliefs and emphases. Some people and groups in the peace movement oppose any involvement in war or war-making, whereas others are primarily concerned about nuclear weapons, land mines, or a particular war.

Other social movements include the labor, feminist, environmental, gay and lesbian, animal rights, and disability movements. Movements provide an important context for activism in several ways. They constitute a network of individuals and groups that is a source of communication, advice and inspiration. They provide a learning environment, with activists drawing on the experience of other groups to find out what works. And they provide a framework or perspective for understanding society, its problems, possible futures, and ways of bringing about change. This framework, or belief system, develops out of the experience of activists, combined with the ideas of writers and leaders, some who are part of the movement and some who are largely independent of it.

For example, the feminist movement has supported activism through the network of individuals and groups, has fostered learning about tactics, and has offered an understanding of the problem of patriarchy through women sharing their experience and through feminist writers presenting ideas that illuminate and inspire their readers.

Most movements have activist and non-activist aspects. The feminist movement, for example, has included plenty of activism, including confrontation and noncooperation with sexist practices. There are also many important parts of the movement that are less activist or non-activist. Women's consciousness raising groups - in which women share their experiences - were a key part of the second wave of the western feminist movement, starting in the 1960s, but most of these groups did not engage in action. Similarly, liberal feminists who operated through the system by pushing for equal opportunity laws and procedures were at the less activist end of the spectrum, as were those who put all their energy into feminist scholarship.

This again raises the issue of the boundaries of what is called activism. Someone working on a campaign might spend time listening to the news, reading and sending e-mails, phoning others, participating in a meeting, and writing a grant proposal. None of this is out in public, such as joining a rally or blockade, but it is all an essential part of what makes such public events possible. It is useful to distinguish between "direct action" or "front-line action," in which people are putting their bodies on the line, and support work, which is usually behind the scenes. Without the support work, the front-line action could hardly occur. This is analogous to military forces: only a few troops are engaged in fighting, with vastly

more personnel involved in accounts, cooking, maintenance, and a host of other support activities.

Those involved in behind-the-scenes work, in support of a cause, can either be called activists or supporters or members of an activist group or movement. This is a matter of definition but has a wider significance. For many people who are concerned about the world's problems, and especially in social movement groups, there is status in being called an activist. This can lead to a valuing of dramatic and visible direct action and a corresponding devaluation of routine, less visible activity such as answering correspondence or handling accounts. On the other hand, some people who take action do not think of themselves as activists: in their minds, they are simply doing what is necessary to address a pressing problem.

It is useful to think of an ecology of activism, in which a flower or fruit can only exist with the support of nutrients, roots, stems, pollinators, and sunlight. Analogously, effective direct action depends on prior learning, supportive group members, resources (including funds), and communication. Many people can contribute to making activism effective without necessarily being activists themselves: financial contributors, resource people, teachers, supportive friends and family members, and journalists, among others.

There are some activists who operate on their own, largely or entirely independent of groups. They might produce their own leaflets and hold a single-person vigil outside an office. Such individuals, if campaigning on a relevant issue, could be considered part of a social movement. A few such individual activists take up issues that no one else is concerned about. Most activists find it much easier to be part of a group, but this is not an obligation!

Areas of Activism

Activism can be on behalf of a great many causes, such as labor, religious, or environmental goals. Some people associate activism with "progressive" causes that promote equality and the rights of those with less power, but activism can just as well be used to attack the weak. Tim Jordan usefully proposes three types of activism, oriented to the past, present, and future.

Past-oriented or reactionary activism seeks to protect the interests of those with more power, often at the expense of those who are weaker. Examples are men who assault gays, vigilantes against illegal immigration, and campaigners for aggressive wars.

Present-oriented activism is aimed at changing policies. This is also called reformism. Examples are campaigns for laws and regulations, such as on election financing, gun control, or whistleblower protection.

Future-oriented activism - called by Jordan "activism!" with an exclamation point - is about changing social relations, not just policies. Examples are greater equality in the family, worker participation in decision making, and treating non-human animals as valuable in themselves. Most of the entries in this encyclopedia are about future-oriented activism.

The idea of the political left and right is often used to classify activism. It is most appropriate applied to labor (left) versus capital (right), but does not work so well as a way of classifying positions on other issues. The so-called new social movements - student, feminist, environmental, and others - that developed in the 1960s and thereafter do not comfortably fit within the left-right classification system.

Those on the left are often called progressives or radicals and those on the right conservatives or reactionaries. But if conservative means maintaining the status quo and reactionary means harking back to an earlier age, then movements do not always line up in a predictable way. For example, environmentalists campaigning against a waste dump or chemical factory are seeking to maintain the status quo in the face of industries trying to change it. Environmentalists seeking to return a region to earlier vegetation patterns, before human settlement, could be called radicals because they are challenging the logic of industrial development or reactionaries because they want to recreate an earlier time.

It is possible to see activism as a spectrum from the local to the global, both geographically and in relation to the person. Local activism is often about protecting the quality of life of a family or small community, such as when local citizens campaign for better schools or hospitals or against a factory or freeway. This is sometimes disparagingly called NIMBY (Not-In-My-Back-Yard) activism.

A broader focus brings concern for groups subject to disadvantage or discrimination, including women, ethnic minorities, the poor, and people with disabilities. Much activism is carried out by people in these groups, supported by some from more privileged groups. For example, some men are pro-feminist activists and some able-bodied people advocate on behalf of those with disabilities.

Traditionally, most activism within a country focused on issues affecting that country. But there is an increasing orientation to issues transcending national borders. Sometimes this is because the issues are global, such as climate change. But in many cases, it is simply because the scope of concern has widened. Torture, a problem in numerous countries, is challenged by human rights groups, often from outside the country where torture takes place.

Local and global forms of activism sometimes pull in opposite directions but can be mutually supportive. For example, NIMBY opposition to a nuclear waste repository assists, and is assisted by, the global anti-nuclear movement.

Traditionally, most activism focused on humans. The animal rights and environmental movements have broadened the area of concern beyond humans to other forms of life and even to inorganic nature. We can expect in future that the boundaries of activism will continue to expand to domains that are now hardly recognized, including human technological creations.

The domain of activism has also expanded inwards, from the public sphere into personal and private realms. Examples include sexual harassment, bullying, and domestic violence. These often take place between individuals, out of the public eye. Activism has been central to the response, in two ways. First, activists have identified these as social problems and campaigned to raise awareness about them. These efforts sometimes have led to laws and procedures being introduced. Second, individuals and small groups have developed techniques to deter and challenge sexual harassers, bullies, and batterers.

Leaders

Leaders play an important role in activist groups and movements. They can play a variety of roles, for example as figureheads, spokespeople, role models, strategists, and theorists.

A few activist leaders become famous. Probably the two most famous activists in the twentieth century who did not become heads of state are Mohandas Gandhi, leader of the Indian independence movement from 1915 until independence in 1947, and Martin Luther King, Jr., leader of the US civil rights movement from the late 1950s until his death in 1968. But few activist leaders are as well known as presidents, prime ministers, or dictators.

Activist leaders are important both externally and internally. To the wider public, they are symbols of social concern. Due to their formal position in an organization or to their personal visibility, they receive disproportionate media attention. Inside movements, charismatic leaders can attract and retain members and hold a group together. Wise leaders can give guidance on strategies and internal dynamics.

Leaders often come under attack by opposition forces: discrediting a leader is a way of discrediting an entire movement.

Leaders can also be a source of tension within movements. Some leaders develop their own agendas that clash with the desires of members. Leaders can be co-opted by their opponents, for example by being given a position in government or industry.

The importance of activist leaders is reflected in this encyclopedia, with entries for individuals such as Aung San Suu Kyi and Rosa Parks. Learning about a leader is a useful entry point for learning about an entire movement.

Nevertheless, focusing on leaders can be somewhat misleading, because most activism is a collective activity. Leaders would not exist except for the quiet, unheralded efforts of hundreds of ordinary activists.

Furthermore, in some groups and movements there is a commitment to sharing power and an opposition to formal hierarchy. Such groups might adopt consensus decision-making and encourage everyone to develop a range of skills and play a variety of roles. Leadership still exists in such

groups, but it is leadership based on contributions and respect, not formal roles.

Much of the feminist movement operates this way. There are certainly quite a number of prominent feminists, but they are more commonly writers and commentators than leaders of activist groups.

This can be contrasted with political groups with official leaders. For example, Nelson Mandela was the leader of the African National Congress in South Africa, an activist political movement, and later became head of state, entering the formal political system, where he achieved vastly greater visibility.

Most activist movements contain a combination of formal structure and egalitarian dynamics. In writings about activist movements, it is worth remembering that there is usually much more attention to formal structures and leaders than to ordinary activists and everyday activities.

Theory

Activism, despite its importance historically and in struggles every day, has received relatively little attention from scholars. Most history is written about powerful and prominent people and about official systems and activities, such as governments, elections, militaries, and wars. Even when the focus is on a social problem, such as slavery, there is consideration attention to official actions, such as President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. The vast amount of individual and small-group activism may be given only a brief discussion or be entirely ignored.

News reports give a distorted picture of activism, with vastly more coverage of violence than peaceful activities. In reporting on Israel/Palestine, there is extensive coverage of suicide bombings but hardly any mention of the great amount of nonviolent activism that occurs all the time by both Israelis and Palestinians.

The research most relevant to activism is about social movements. As well as telling the stories of movements, researchers have looked at social structures that influence their origins and survival, resources that movements can use, political opportunities that they can take up, and systems of meaning that enable them to get their message across.

However, little of the research on social movements tells much about what activists do and how they can do it better. Few activists pay much attention to research on social movements, because so little is oriented to their practical concerns. In addition, most scholarly research is written in a style that is not attractive to activists.

Far more relevant to activists are manuals that give advice on community organizing, analyzing power structures, group dynamics, decision making, fund raising, and conflict resolution. An example is the Coover et al.'s *Resource Manual for a Living Revolution*, widely used in nonviolent action training in several countries.

Many activists learn about issues - corporate globalization, genetic engineering, or whatever - in a manner analogous to grassroots educator Paulo Freire's method of teaching reading and writing through politically charged words. Activists learn what they can about issues so they can be effective in their actions and they take action because of what they have learned about issues.

Activists tend to draw on whatever information is useful for their immediate practical purposes. If the problem is homelessness, then they want information about the local situation and what is effective for dealing with it. At the same time, many activists are inspired by eloquent writers.

One of the major interactions between academia and activism is via individuals who are involved in both, including students and academics. These individuals provide a bridge for taking ideas from activism into theory and vice versa.

Activist Trajectories

In parallel with activism are debates about activism. If a particular form of action alienates too many people, then it is hardly worth doing. Therefore, convincing people that forms of action are acceptable is a key part of making activism viable. Debates about activism take place in the media, in everyday conversations, and not least among activists themselves.

Individuals can enter and exit activist roles in a variety of ways. Some begin with a small involvement, such as helping with a street stall or

attending a public meeting, and gradually become more engaged over the years, perhaps becoming regular participants or even full-time activists. Others become heavily involved very quickly but drop out of activism due to burnout or other commitments.

It is difficult to maintain a high level of activism in addition to other major commitments, especially a conventional job and a family. Some sorts of activism - crewing on a peace voyage or attending a vigil lasting weeks - are virtually impossible for those with heavy family or job commitments, so it is easier for students or retired people to participate. One of the challenging tasks for social movements is to develop campaigns that allow many people to participate, not just those able to drop all other commitments.

Just like individuals, social movements go through cycles, though there is no fixed pattern. Movements sometimes start with a surge of innovative action, as many people join, attracted by the exciting feeling of change and making a difference. After the first several years, though, the initial enthusiasm can decline, media attention fades, and the movement appears to lose momentum. Activism can become routine, like ritual May Day marches organized by the labor movement.

Some movements fade away entirely. Others are institutionalized: their purposes are incorporated in formal systems, such as welfare services or equal opportunity offices. In these cases, some former activists may become leading officials in the system. There are also movements that maintain their levels of activism over many years or decades, continuing to innovate and attract new members.

The peace movement has followed a pattern of rapid expansion and decline. For example, the movement against nuclear weapons surged in the late 1950s and faded away in the early 1960s; then in the 1980s it surged and declined again. There are some anti-nuclear activists who continue even when the movement is at a low level, but the pattern is one of boom and bust. There is little institutionalization of peace movement agendas: for example, there are few government disarmament departments.

In contrast, the environmental movement has maintained a more consistent level of activism, with a variety of groups that attract members and support. The mix of urgent environmental issues can change - from

pesticides to nuclear power to climate change - but the level of involvement has not varied dramatically. Environmental agendas have been institutionalized, with government environment departments and industries adopting environmental programs.

The Future of Activism

It is safe to predict that activism will continue, both with current activist campaigns and branching out into new issues and using new tactics. Activism may decline when institutionalization is seen to address social problems, but new problems keep being brought to attention. Furthermore, some old issues reappear. For example, slavery was thought to have been abolished in the 1800s, but today it occurs in new forms - and there is a contemporary anti-slavery movement.

There are two important reasons why activism is likely to expand and become more sophisticated. First, activists learn from and are inspired by each other; the amount of information available about activism is dramatically increasing, thus laying the groundwork for further activism. Second, people are becoming better educated and less acquiescent to authority, and therefore better able to judge when systems are not working and willing to take action themselves.

Today's political systems of representative government are themselves the outcome of previous activism. If these systems were fully responsive to everyone's needs, there would be no need for activism, but this possibility seems remote. For political systems to co-opt activism, activism would need to become part of the system, with techniques such as strikes, boycotts, and sit-ins becoming part of the normal political process - a prospect as radical today as voting was in the 1700s. When that happens, we can anticipate that new forms of activism will arise, challenging the injustices of whatever system is in place.

- *Brian Martin*

Thanks to Truda Gray for valuable comments on a draft.

see also: nonviolence and activism, sociology of social movements, strategies (activist)

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Brenda Rosser,

Activist and Writer

7 Ways to be Wise in Our Time and Place.

There has come a time when it is clear that many Australian citizens have lost sight of the essential nature of things. Where our patterns of thought and behaviour – our everyday social ‘norms’ – are inevitably leading us to an apocalyptic future of deprivation and long-lasting ruin. In the hills and valleys of Tasmania I see a merger of humans with machine. Where minds have become twisted and adapted to the dreadful logic and form of industrial tools. The vast destruction of our native forests and the attendant poisoning of our natural environment, the overfished seas, and the now vast weed-and-vermin-filled lands of absentee corporate owners, are merely the physical manifestations of a system of laws and inherent structural rules that have trespassed way beyond human ‘morals’ or concerns for community. It is an automatic momentum that also denies recognition to nature and natural processes.

The moving out of our self-imposed subjugation will not require the piling up of facts. Rather it will require the simple anticipation of consequences. To be wise in our time is to:

1. Make our industrial processes and our way of life sustainable. Profit, in Australia and other ‘developed’ nations is only conceived as returns to shareholders and ‘farmers’. Land is treated as dead matter that “has no significance beyond a quarry for exploitation” as Schumaker puts it. E.F. Schumaker goes on to say that, in our economic systems, the ideal of industry is to eliminate the living factor, even including the human factor, and to turn the productive process over to machines. Just as “Alfred North Whitehead defined life as ‘an offensive directed against the repetitious mechanism of the universe’, so we may define modern industry as ‘an offensive against the unpredictability, unpunctuality, general waywardness and cussedness of living nature, including man.” Industrial-style agriculture and agribusiness was introduced into the countries of the southern hemisphere by the US Ford and Rockefeller foundations¹⁷. It relied on dangerous technologies that included

¹⁷ A report released by Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy.

artificial fertilisers and toxic man-made pesticides along with heavy reliance on irrigation. This new-style farming resulted in escalating costs of inputs that deepened the economic divide between large and small farmers. It set the scene for the taxpayer-funded corporate takeover of vast areas of prime farming land; with resulting devastation to farming soils, water resources, forests and ecosystems that are all now on the point of exhaustion. Agribusiness is energy-intensive as well and with global energy shortages now looming the resultant attempt to takeover even more land with the production of biofuels has resulted in a sharp escalation of all the problems mentioned above coupled with alarming rises in the price of food and now water. Biofuels cannot possibly replace the energy-intensive fuel of liquid petroleum, in any case. Making ethanol uses more energy than it creates.¹⁸ In 2006 the United States Department of Agriculture expected that energy-related farm expenses were to climb 50% above what they were a mere three years earlier¹⁹. With the dramatic climb in the cost of fuel just in the last few months that figure surely must have evolved into a massive underestimate.

2. Understand that natural systems are booby-trapped with potentially catastrophic tipping points and feedback loops. There are thresholds past which the slow environmental change gives way to sudden and self-perpetuating global systemic collapse. Scientists are observing that climate change is happening faster than anyone predicted and many in the field are openly expressing alarm.²⁰ It is not even clear yet whether or not we can reverse the changes that global warming has wrought already and Dr Hansen, from NASA,

¹⁸ Ethanol Bust Makes Loser of Bush, Gates, Archer Daniels Midland

By Joe Carroll and Mario Parker. 19th November 2007

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601109&sid=aEO0Q6r2lwWs&refer=home>

¹⁹ 'Energy and Agriculture August 2006'

United States Department of Agriculture—2007 Farm Bill Theme Paper

www.usda.gov/documents/Farmbill07energy.pdf

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²⁰ "Things are happening a lot faster than anyone predicted," says Bill Chameides, chief scientist for the advocacy group Environmental Defense and a former professor of atmospheric chemistry. "The last 12 months have been alarming." Adds Ruth Curry of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts: "The ripple through the scientific community is palpable." Global Warming Heats Up.

By Jeffrey Kluger. Sunday, Mar. 26, 2006

<http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1176980,00.html>

is saying that a major tipping point will be reached by 2016 if levels of greenhouse gases like methane and CO₂ are not reduced.²¹ We need to acknowledge that there is a need to draw unambiguous and strictly-enforced limits immediately on destructive practices and lifestyles.

3. Know there are ongoing costs to the action/inaction that has already occurred. Australian federal and state Governments should have taken action *decades ago*. "It is too late for the city [of Sydney] to avoid a warming of about 1 degree by 2030 as well as a 3 per cent reduction in annual rainfall because of polluting gases already in the atmosphere."^{22,23} This will occur on top of the drying and increased temperatures that have already occurred in South East Australia; changes that have exacerbated the effects of drought and reduced snow cover. The ocean waters are warming off the east coast of Tasmania at a rate triple that experienced globally²⁴. Because CO₂ stays in the atmosphere for about a century then a stabilisation of current levels of this gas will not prevent the levels from rising. This situation means, according to Joh Palfreman, that we have to phase out the use of fossil fuels altogether – an extraordinarily difficult task²⁵. As if this isn't bad enough we can look at the alarming consequences of just two other unsustainable practices. If we were to cease the current use of toxic and residual industrial pesticides in agriculture and 'forestry' today these poisons will still continue to leach into the rivers and streams for a hundred years. In respect of biodiversity, ANU's Professor Lindenmeyer has warned that the attempt to offset land

²¹ Earth's Climate Approaches Dangerous Tipping Point
<http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/jun2007/2007-06-01-01.asp>

²² Too late to avoid warming: report. Deborah Smith, Science Editor. October 3, 2007
<http://www.smh.com.au/news/environment/too-late-to-avoid-warming-climate-report/2007/10/02/1191091074799.html>

²³ Climate Change in Australia Report 2007. Projections developed by CSIRO and the Australian Bureau of Meteorology for the Australian Climate Change Science Programme.
<http://www.climatechangeinaustralia.gov.au/resources.php>

²⁴ Too late to avoid warming: report. Deborah Smith, Science Editor. October 3, 2007
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²⁵ Frequently asked questions. By Joh Palfreman, producer, What's Up With the Weather.
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/warming/etc/faqs.html>

clearing with replanting will not restore an area's biodiversity for hundreds of years²⁶.

4. Value biodiversity. Our significant dependence on our wildlife and plants is grounded in scientific fact. Nature IS our source of all forms of wealth and, quite opposed to what you might have learnt at school, there is no such thing as an economic 'externality'. Any change to the diversity of living things and anything that impacts on their quality of life will also affect humans. Interrelatedness, not hierarchy, is the way of nature. However, because our economic and political systems don't acknowledge this fact, we now see that one in eight Australian animals and plants are now under threat of extinction. Half of those threatened or endangered species are at the margins of expanding cities, like Melbourne.²⁷ Globally, the rate of extinction of species "rose dramatically over the last century, with global loss estimates varying between 1% and 11%"²⁸. However, "the absolute rates of species loss in rain forests are 1,000 to 10,000 times the level before human intervention"²⁹, and "it is [also] estimated that we could lose 50% of total biotic diversity in the next 100 years"³⁰.
5. Know that a free market requires ethics and regulation and that not everything is for sale. If economic agents were to do precisely what they wanted, regardless of the consequences, who would want to enter contracts with these people? Indeed at this very moment we are seeing global credit markets shut down for this very reason; a basic lack of trust due to widespread fraud and lack of transparency in transactions. Think about this. Would you buy products from a company that engaged in practices that contaminated your drinking water with dangerous chemicals? Would it make sense to read newspapers compiled by corporations

²⁶ Native plants could take centuries to reverse clearing. By Jane Bardon. Wednesday, 22/11/2006
<http://www.abc.net.au/rural/tas/content/2006/s1794893.htm>

²⁷ Natives under attack from 'deadly' humans. Liz Minchin. The Age newspaper. 3rd September 2007
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²⁸ Jenkins 1992

²⁹ Vitousek et al. 1997

³⁰ Soule 1991

that hid the truth from you? Only if they enjoyed an obvious monopoly over the market! The irony is that well-functioning markets are that way because they are heavily regulated. On the other side of the equation not all that is of value can be subject to quantitative measurement or made amenable to a process of exchange. Water, for example. To trade water is to implement a social system where life itself is for sale.

6. Add up the costs of inaction. Preventative and remedial action may be far cheaper than the cost of not doing anything at all. In fact the former may be considerably rewarding to ordinary citizens. Rewarding jobs can be found in the development and implementation of alternative energy technologies, organic agriculture, construction of efficient housing, native forest conservation and scientific research. Doing nothing, on the other hand, will bring our family farmers to bankruptcy, increase the severity of droughts in South East Australia and escalate disease and malnutrition amongst our population.
7. Realise that technology alone cannot meet our challenges. Once the fundamental laws are understood judgement is required to know how (meaning the method, and/or the technology used) to apply them. Anthropologist K Sivaramakrishnan pointed out that 'when environmental protection is to be accomplished through the exclusion of certain people from the use of a resource, it will follow existing patterns of power and stratification in society'.³¹ Our social values, those such as democracy, egalitarianism, non-violence, and earth-centredness must dictate how and when technology will be used. Above all we should keep in mind the four rules of ecology that the American environmental scientist, Barry Commoner, articulated:

1. Everything is Connected to Everything Else. There is one ecosphere for all living organisms and what affects one, affects all.

2. Everything Must Go Somewhere. There is no "waste" in nature and there is no "away" to which things can be thrown.

³¹ Douglas Kysar, 'Law, Environment and Vision', *Northwestern University Law Review* 675, 2003, p. 686.

3. Nature Knows Best. Humankind has fashioned technology to improve upon nature, but such change in a natural system is, says Commoner, "likely to be detrimental to that system."

4. There Is No Such Thing as a Free Lunch. In nature, both sides of the equation must balance, for every gain there is a cost, and all debts are eventually paid.³²³³

"That which seems to be wealth may in verity be only the gilded index of far-reaching ruin....."

—*John Ruskin, Unto this Last, 1862.*

³² From Wikipedia on 23rd February 2007. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barry_Commoner

³³ this article is based on Seven ideas lost on America by By Jerald L. Schnoor, Editor. February 2008 http://pubs.acs.org/subscribe/journals/esthag-w/2008/feb/policy/030108_comment.html

Jerome Ravetz

Researcher, writer and academic

Their Labs Are Not Our World!

These are notes for a philosophical reconstruction of natural science, making it fit for helping to create a world worth living in.

“Science” is now a highly charged and deeply ambivalent symbol. We all know that science has enabled the production of the wealth that has enabled an increasing proportion of the world’s masses to move out of material poverty. But we are increasingly aware of the costs, in a lifestyle that is quite strictly unsustainable. The strains begin to show, in worldwide shortages and speculation in essential materials like oil and foodstuffs. And particular areas of science are revealed to be ‘toxic’ – they poison the system on which they operate. In every case, the toxicity is the result of a failure to appreciate that the real world is quite different from the artificial, controlled world of the lab. Much of our ‘progress’ has resulted from ignoring that difference; but now we will continue that ignorance at our peril.

Our high-technology agriculture can be said to be ‘toxic’ – it destroys the soil, and robs plants and animals of their goodness, all being done in the name of cheap food but actually to increase the profits of the monopoly suppliers. It’s all rather general, until a particular episode of toxicity occurs. Just now there are the afflicted honeybees, the miners' canaries of our high-tech agriculture. They have been turned into slave-labourers in their science-based industry. They are subjected to overwork, inadequate rest & rehab, malnutrition and poisons. Just like humans under such conditions, they have become breeding grounds for virulent pathogens. The epidemic of 'colony collapse disorder' now threatens all the crops that need them for pollination and hence deep disruption of the world's food supply; but governments are obstinately complacent.

Nowadays even mathematics can go toxic. This may be hard to imagine, but it has happened recently in the scandal of the manipulation of the fraudulent American sub-prime mortgages. This was enabled by Information Technology, whereby the individual assets could be combined and then sliced & diced into ever more arcane forms. In the absence of a real market, prices for these weird things depended on the

quality-grades given by the rating agencies. These agencies naturally became subject to market forces, and their grade-inflation fed a trillion-dollar mutual confidence-trick. The whole procedure depended on the mathematical/computer 'models' that simulated the behaviour of the fictitious markets. These depended on the assumption that things would always behave nicely, indeed that markets would always go up! The result was that when the game was finally exposed we were just hours away from the collapse of the whole system of credit in the U.S.A. This could have led to the closure of banks on a large scale, and shortages of the cash and credit necessary for keeping businesses running. It's impossible to say how big or widespread the meltdown could have been. But toxic mathematics is so deeply embedded in the financial system, that it could have been very serious indeed.

What lessons can be drawn from such examples of toxicity in the name of science? They indicate that like so many others of our inherited secular movements for liberation, science now shows senescence and self-destructive tendencies. Of course great work is still being done by many dedicated scientists. But looking for trends, we see that Big Agri-Food and Big Pharma have joined Big Nuclear and Big Tobacco in the public's list of corporate enterprises depending on toxic science. Considering the emerging technologies centred on nano-, we ask whether we are dealing with a 'sorcerer's apprentice' syndrome, unable to turn off the torrent of innovation regardless of its dangers.

A clue to the philosophical deficiencies of contemporary science lies in the idea of 'non-violence'. This has animated the most significant social movements of our times, and it may well be the key to the survival of civilisation. Where have we ever heard this word used in connection with science? There are just a couple of people on the fringe: Joseph Rotblat, who gave up his scientific career to found the Pugwash movement, and Vandana Shiva, the Indian eco-activist. ('Pugwash' is the name of the home town in Canada of a benefactor, Cyrus Eaton, who sponsored regular meetings between Western and Soviet top scientists through the Cold War, thereby preventing the misunderstandings that could have triggered nuclear war. Vandana Shiva is a trained scientist who has devoted her life to the related causes of non-violent social progress and eco-activism. In neither case does their endeavour count as 'science').

We must ask, can there be any real connection between science and non-violence? There is plenty of connection between science and violence. Science has been used in war from time immemorial, and 'Hiroshima' and 'Agent Orange' are reminders of its role in recent times. Some will even argue that the 'scientific' approach to the natural and social worlds is inherently violent, as it spurns the uniqueness and spiritual qualities of the things it manipulates. But if science, alone among our great social forces, has nothing to do with non-violence, what does that tell us about its role in the contemporary world? Is it merely a tool, capable of use indifferently for good or evil? In that case, what has happened to its earlier promise of progress and liberation?

Where can reconstruction begin? We can start with recovery from a delusion that is now four centuries old, that was very powerful in its time but is now dangerous and destructive. This is, that every problem involving science has just one true answer, expressed in numerical form. We need to realise that some real problems have, as yet, no answer; some have many possible answers; and the most important problems may have so much uncertainty that any numbers can be misleading. The scientists themselves may be most in need of re-education, as they have been so conditioned by many years of dogmatic training as to be incapable of imaging any alternative to their simplistic world-view. For an example, many well-meaning scientists promoted 'bio-fuels' – what could be more 'green' than growing our fuel rather than taking it out of the earth? It did not occur to them that to grow fuel-crops means growing fewer food-crops, and so they were surprised when their solution to one problem only made other problems worse!

Our inherited philosophy of science, of simple solutions for simple problems, is still held quite sincerely by many. But it has now become a vehicle for the most pernicious influences. In order to define problems that can be solved, this sort of science abstracts from the multi-causality, uncertainties, complexities and value-commitments of our real world. It studies only the simple, stable and controllable reality of the lab or computer simulation. This is just the sort of artificiality that suits the purposes of institutions seeking profit, power or privilege. For in that situation no voice is heard except that of the expert, for whom the whole world is just a textbook exercise. Problems of 'unintended consequences' on societies, people and nature are dismissed as 'unscientific' and therefore unreal, not worth considering. All impediments to the exercise

of profit, power and privilege through science are thereby removed.

A most important political act of our time is to establish the distinction between our complex world of strivings for sustainability and justice, and the simple labs of their corporate science. One approach is through 'Post-Normal Science', which typically starts when 'facts are uncertain, values in dispute, stakes high and decisions urgent'. Such problems cannot be solved by mathematical demonstration; they require an 'extended peer community' for their resolution. In that process, scientists learn that theirs is not the only valid perspective on a problem of policy or practice. Their reductionist philosophy of the textbook or classroom may be seriously misleading, out in the real world.

When scientists are freed from the intellectual hobbles of reductionism, they can rejoin the human race. Learning that numbers do not guarantee 'objectivity', they can appreciate that like all other social activities, science needs integrity lest it slide into corruption. We have seen how unscrupulous governments and corporations can manipulate and deform all the judgments that guide the research process. We can learn that on contentious policy issues where there is no conclusive evidence, 'negotiation in good faith' can be an effective approach to good results. And in such negotiations, all sorts of knowledges, based on all sorts of experiences, can be truly complementary when dialogues are animated by the spirit of non-violence. The idea of 'science' can be extended beyond the doings of men in white coats, to include all disciplined social endeavours for improving our understanding and wellbeing in the world. Science can make a great contribution to this renaissance of knowledge; just imagine what it will be like when there is a computer in every classroom in the world, connected to the Internet. The empowerment of the world's masses, when they can freely partake of our great cultural heritage and also share their visions and plans among themselves across communities, can be like nothing that civilisation has seen before. We could imagine an 'extended peer community' that encompasses much of the human race.

There is a good historical foundation for this ethical component of science, since the greatest scientists have always been 'natural philosophers', dedicated to the noblest goals. Many have commented on the affinity between that endeavour and the religious life. The recent historical breach between 'science' and 'religion' is now being healed in

other ways. Science never did prove that the world is a big box called Space floating down a river called Time, full of billiard-balls called Matter. Contemporary physics shows that whatever reality might be like, it certainly can't be like that. The supposed implausibility of the therapies of Complementary and Alternative Medicine is just a temporary and local cultural artifact. The human imagination may well be on the brink of a great expansion.

With this perspective on the different realities within science, and on how scientific styles interact with politics and profit, we can appreciate some important lessons from history. It was the influential chemist Justus von Liebig who advocated replacing natural humus with the artificial fertilisers that eventually caused the murder of the world's soils; and it was the visionary Rudolf Steiner whose understanding led to the theory and practice of their rescue. Who was the more genuine 'scientist' in this case?

The door is already opening. Britain's most distinguished scientist, (Lord) Martin Rees, has already warned that we have only an even chance of surviving the next century [1]. Both in the UK and the EU, there is an official commitment to ensuring the safety of new technologies. And in a recent great international debate, it was established that the messy, creative world of real farming cannot be usefully managed as if it were a factory [2]. Now even the worst polluters employ 'greenwash', confirming that sustainability holds the moral high ground.

We can sum up the argument by paraphrasing the early Marx. He said that previously philosophers had tried to interpret the world; the task, however, is to change it. We might say that previously scientists had tried to change the world in the simplified image of their labs; the task however is to frame a science that is emancipated from the corporate labs, and that serves our real world, with self-awareness, commitment and love. There is no question of throwing away our scientific knowledge in the search for an imaginary simpler, purer life. Rather, we can embark on another 'renaissance', with a renewed synthesis of ancient wisdom and modern knowledge, and thereby achieve a new science that enriches all our lives.

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